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**THE  
KNIGHT  
OF THE  
VIRGIN**

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**VICENTE  
BLASCO  
IBANEZ**

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**THE KNIGHT OF THE VIRGIN**

VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ *has also written:*

Unknown Lands (The Story of Columbus)

The Intruder

Reeds and Mud

The Mob

Pope of the Sea

A Novelist's Tour of the World

Argentina y sus Grandezas

Mare Nostrum (Our Sea)

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

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Woman Triumphant

The Temptress

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Alphonso XIII Unmasked

The Old Woman of the Movies

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# The Knight of the Virgin

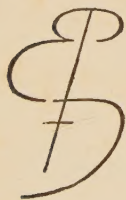
by

VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ

*Author of "Mare Nostrum," "Unknown Lands," "Reeds and Mud,"  
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*E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.*

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FIRST EDITION



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PART I

QUEEN GOLD FLOWER





## CHAPTER I

### VOICES OF HEAVEN

The bell began to swing in the belfry of the new church, and the air of the Virgin Island seemed to awaken with sudden tremors of surprise and fear. For the first time in the history of the world that atmosphere was stirring with vibrations of metal fashioned by the hand of man! Fernando Cuevas thought he could see the tree tops of the neighboring forest come to life and move their green crests in rhythm with the brazen clangor. Monkeys and parrots, sole denizens of the age-old wilderness, began leaping and hopping from branch to branch, and then stood still listening in silent curiosity to this new voice, more powerful than any cry which living thing had uttered in that tropical paradise.

At the moment the sometime deck-hand "Andujar" was standing in the doorway of his house listening to this salvo of metallic music which for the first time was being addressed to a rising sun. The "house" for that matter was a frame "bohio" built in Indian style, the sides made of poles filled in with mud, and the cone-shaped roof covered with a thatch of palm leaves. In front of it and to either side stood other bohios in double row marking the outlines of a broad avenue, as it were, in a military cantonment. There was plenty of room around each cabin. Land cost nothing. The streets of the village were

absurdly wide and stretched away to an uncluttered horizon.

To be sure, at the end of his own "street" Cuevas could see a high stone wall—one of the newly built ramparts of Isabella, the first city founded by the Spaniards on these "Hither Islands" of the Grand Khan's Empire. Don Cristobal Colón, Admiral of the Ocean Sea and Viceroy of New Found Lands, always "saw things big." For him this group of huts was a "city" and had to have its circle of masonry to defend it from the Indian braves who might come down from the interior of Hispaniola; and proud of his handiwork he had called the place Isabella in honor of Her Highness, the Queen of Spain.

Cuevas could well admire the marvelous speed with which the town had sprung from the soil. Here they were in January of the year '94! Four months out of Cadiz! Yet already above the conical points of the bohios of mud and leaves rose a fine stone church, in its belfry the single bell that had been brought from Spain. The chaplain of the colony, Father Boil, a Catalan friar, had been named Apostolic Vicar by Pope Alexander VI, the second Borgia; and the twelve priests who had made the voyage with him were to consecrate the new temple that very morning in solemn ceremonial. And something less pretentious but more important so far as Fernando was concerned was to take place in the new church just afterwards. They were to christen his little Alonso, the first white child born in these Asiatic islands that lay off the shores of India and the mouths of the Ganges. Lucero, the mother, meantime was doing well! She was peacefully sleeping within the bohio behind him, clasping to her breast the little child whose shrill protestations

made in its father's ears a music sweeter than the very tones of the bell.

What busy months these had been for Cuevas since his return from that first voyage to the New World! First of all Lucero had taken baptism at the suggestion of Gabriel the Physician, who fortunately had been at hand to smooth all difficulties in connection with the marriage. But then shortly Fernando had been obliged to leave his bride, and hurry off to Seville in search of his friend and protector, Don Alonso de Ojeda. Lucero, dressed now in female garb again, had bravely withheld her tears on taking leave of her husband.

"The right kind of a wife for a soldier!" Cuevas proudly reflected.

At Seville the Admiral and Cardinal Fonseca were already preparing for a second expedition to the realms of the Grand Khan; but this time the ships would sail from the Port of Cadiz. Of the eighteen vessels in the fleet fourteen were caravels, but the others were "carracas," the heaviest sea-going craft known to those days. These were of such draft they could not ascend the Guadalquivir.

Cuevas had been assigned to a "carraca" commanded by Don Alonso de Ojeda. The young captain was not a sailor, to be sure—this would be his first trip to sea. If he held supreme authority over the vessel, two pilots would be on hand at his orders to direct navigation. Besides its crew the boat would carry twenty war horses which had been used at the siege of Granada; and the knights who came with them were also soldiers from that same war. Cuevas had not been lucky enough to receive one of those magnificent steeds. He figured on the rolls

of the expedition as personal squire to the commander, Don Alonso, but on foot.

"Don't worry!" the young captain said to him, "What is war for but to get people killed? The moment one of these gentlemen kicks the bucket, I'll see that you have his horse!"

On boarding his vessel the second day before the fleet set sail, Cuevas had a great surprise. He had been off to Cadiz on an errand for his new master and now here on the quarter-deck in conversation with the commander stood a young woman, closely wrapped in a cloak. Yes, Lucero was coming too—and it was clear that Don Alonso had no objections! Ready for anything that seemed recklessly bold or unusual, Ojeda indeed thought this a fine idea! He was assenting in the greatest amusement to everything the girl was saying.

Lucero had little but contempt for her husband's credulousness:

"You really thought I could marry you one day and let you run off the next to the other side of the world?"

If she had bidden him farewell and allowed him to depart alone, that was to avoid arguments with her mother and Doctor Acosta. She had already planned a secret flight. A driver on the line between Cordoba and Cadiz had agreed to take her with him. The man was a "new Christian," so really there had been no danger at all. The "new Christians" all owed something to Doctor Acosta. Her connection with that powerful personage had been enough to inspire respect even for a girl as young as she. Now here she was about to make her second voyage across the Ocean Sea, but this time without disguise, dressed as a woman.



Fernando's half-hearted protests were without avail. No provision had been made in the fleet for women. It had been taken for granted that only men would be enrolled. The Sovereigns, furthermore, had authorized the embarkation of twelve hundred individuals only, and the lists were full. But Don Alonso felt himself master of everything concerning his vessel: so did the other captains. When the vessels actually put to sea more than sixteen hundred souls were aboard, among them, in addition to last minute authorizations and stowaways, a number of women of low estate who were following their lovers, soldiers or sailors, in disguise. The one legally married woman aboard the fleet was Lucero. She had the approval of her captain, though it was all without the knowledge of the Admiral.

They had sailed from Cadiz at sunrise on September 25th in the year 1493. First they stopped at the Canaries to take goats, sheep, heifers, hens, turkeys, ducks aboard, with the idea of acclimating such animals on Hispaniola. The main-deck of Ojeda's craft looked more like a barnyard. One section of the planking had been boarded off to make a pig-pen for eight sows which soon were blessed with numerous offspring. The herbarians also procured at the Canaries, roots and seeds of oranges, lemons, and other fruits with which they planned to recreate in the new world those fragrant gardens which had made the islands of the Atlantic known in ancient days as the Gardens of the Hesperides.

To tell the truth, Cuevas looked forward to the voyage with some uneasiness: he had never forgotten that terrible storm on the return journey which had blown the Fleet of Discovery into the Port of Lisbon. But his

fears proved groundless. Once more the ships sped onward over a placid sea with winds astern. Indeed, how comfortable it all was! Fernando had a cabin in the after-castle with his wife, in the very apartment of Don Alonso! Once more they had sailed for days through banks of floating grasses that flecked the surface of a quiet ocean; and soon the flights of birds began, great flocks of parrakeets, and other feathered natives of the tropical seas. Fernando and Lucero were the only veterans aboard. How proud they were to be able to talk with assurance of these familiar signs! Even Don Alonso and his two pilots would stand about listening to them respectfully!

As a matter of fact, the Admiral was following a more southerly course than on his first voyage. He was anxious to see the islands peopled by the Caribs, of whom the timid natives of Hispaniola had spoken in words and gestures of terrified astonishment. So it came about that the land which eventually appeared on the blue horizon ahead, belonged to one of those Little Antilles that stretch out in a half circle from the eastern point of Porto Rico to the coast of what was later to be Brazil, forming a barrier between the isles of the Sea of Caribs and the great Ocean.

One by one they rose, these islands. The first appeared on Sunday and Columbus called it Dominica in reverence for that holy day. The second he called Marigalante, the original name of his old flagship, the *Santa Maria*, and now the name of the ship on which he was sailing. The third he called Guadelupe, because on the occasion of his pilgrimage to the monastery of the Virgin in Extremadura in fulfillment of one of the vows taken dur-

ing the great storm, he had promised the nuns of the convent to give the name of their Virgin to one of the first new lands he should thereafter discover.

The islands were all volcanic mountains rising, their flanks clothed with splendorous vegetation, in lofty pyramids of green from the plain of the blue sea. They were inhabited without exception by unfriendly peoples who received the Spaniards with clouds of arrows or else fled into the interiors to prepare ambushes. Nothing could have been more to the liking of Don Alonso de Ojeda, who landed several times for the pleasure of fighting these native braves. Never, meantime, had he allowed the young husband to attend him. Fernando's duty was with his wife!

Ojeda's soldiers returned from shore with marvellous tales of man-eating savages. They found, so they said, human bodies hanging from the ceilings of the bohios as though drying in the air after the manner of hams or bacon. In one Indian village, in a pot left boiling over a fire, they discovered pieces of a human body cooking in a stew of goose and parrot. As for the commander, these had been Ojeda's first contacts with the exuberant vegetation of the New World. He glowed with all his Spanish rhetoric over the beauties of the virgin forests, the fragrance of the flowers and gums, the brilliant colors of the birds of plumage, the abundance of feathered game.

As the fleet went on there were other battles where, to the surprise of the Spaniards, native women fought side by side with their husbands. These were undoubtedly the Amazons, of whom the Discoverers had heard reports on the First Voyage. And they could deliver a sturdy blow,

these women! A number of the soldiers found their armor pierced by arrows from female archers.

The fleet did not linger long in these new lands. The Admiral, for his part, was concerned for the safety of the handful of men which he had left as a garrison at Nativity. Most of the members of the expedition were making their first voyage at sea, and were eager to be on shore again as soon as possible. Such veterans as had come on the Second Voyage were talking gayly of the happy days they had passed on the shores of Haiti; and the others, taking the wonderful tales they heard at literal worth, could hardly wait to reach an earthly paradise which they were sure would be flowing with milk and honey and paved with gold. More circumspect by nature, Cuevas would think now and then of the painful disappointments the Fleet of Discovery had suffered on the earlier voyage.

They made Haiti at the Gulf, so called, of Arrows, where the first blood had been shed between Spaniards and natives of the New World, Fernando himself using his knife on one of the braves who had attacked his party. The Admiral had brought back two Indians from among the many who had been taken to Spain on the first voyage. They were now dressed in Spanish clothes, and spoke the Spanish language perfectly. Both had accepted baptism and one of them even was returning to his home country as a missionary. This latter was landed at the Gulf of Arrows laden with gifts for such natives as he might meet. He was never seen again. Diego Colon, however, was still abroad. Diego Colon was an Indian from San Salvador (Guanahani) who had been baptized in honor of the younger brother of the Admiral. He was



to remain a faithful friend of the Spaniards his whole life long. At the moment he was the one interpreter still available for the fleet.

On November 25th anchors were dropped off Monte Cristi, near the mouth of the stream which Columbus had called the River of Gold; and grave fears began to rise as to the fate of Nativity. As the sailors explored the coast they came upon two human bodies, one of them with a rope of Spanish origin about the throat; but the corpses were so disfigured that it was impossible to tell whether they were Indians or white men. Shortly, Fernando, too, happened to be put ashore. He came upon two other corpses, one of them with a beard. There could be no doubt that this time it was the body of a Spaniard. However it seemed impossible to the Admiral that any attack could have been made on his garrison. Indians were paddling up to the fleet in their canoes with the greatest trustfulness, and fearlessly boarding the vessels to trade with the sailors.

It was nightfall on the 27th when the fleet arrived off the shoals that formed the harbor at Nativity. Columbus kept a league off shore. He had a healthy fear of the rocks on which his flagship had grounded and left her bones during the First Voyage. The sun had already set and darkness came on with the suddenness usual in the tropics. The coast lay indistinct before them. To relieve his anxiety Columbus ordered two cannon fired: the Spaniards in the fort had several pieces of artillery; undoubtedly they would answer his signal. The detonations died away over the ocean and along the shore. Vainly captains, pilots, sailors strained eyes and ears in hope of some reply. No sound! No sign of a light! Cuevas

and Lucero, for their part, felt a sudden tremor of fright! They had never thought of that! Supposing Pero Gonzalez had not died? Supposing by some caprice of fate he were still alive and should denounce them to the Admiral? But no, there could be little likelihood of that! They too succumbed to the anguish of that silent watch in the night, certain now that in the morning no trace of life would be found in that first town of the New World which they had seen in its founding.

Hours went by, hours of alternating hope and discouragement. Toward midnight a commotion in the water near the flagship! Yes, a small boat! A canoe! In it two Indians calling the name "Colon" from a distance! But for a time they refused to come aboard. Finally a sailor held a torch in front of the Admiral's face that the Indians might recognize his features. Convinced that it was indeed the Son of Heaven they had known a year before, they finally ventured to approach. One of them was a relative of "King" Guahanacari. He brought two masks of gold-leaf, like those the Discoverers had collected in such abundance on the First Voyage. The account the Indians gave of what had happened to the garrison at Nativity was hard to follow. Diego Colon came from the Bahamas to the North. His language was altogether different from that spoken by the natives on Hispaniola. Columbus made out, however, that many of the Spaniards were dead, but that others had gone inland and were living there with native wives. It seemed that a certain Caonabo, a terrible chief from Cibao, "Land of the Golden Mountains," had attacked "King" Guahanacari, friend of the "Sons of Heaven." The "king" had been wounded in a foot and was still unable

to walk. That was why he had not come aboard to welcome his friend the Admiral.

Columbus was somewhat reassured. He had great faith in his friend Guahanacari, the virtuous "king." Beyond a doubt some of his men had been killed but others were still alive, settled probably in the interior to be nearer the sources of gold. They must have collected great quantities of the precious metal in a year's time.

The Spaniards aboard the fleet waited for dawn in eager expectation. The natives had brought gifts of gold. In the morning the new colonists would begin themselves to have all the attractive adventures related by the veterans of the First Voyage. Fernando and Lucero were not so hopeful. They felt somehow that the Indian messengers had been concealing more than they told, that the sun would rise on the ruins left by some great catastrophe. Pinzon's protests came back to their minds. The mariner of Palos had thought it downright madness to leave a mere handful of white men among such multitudes of Indians of doubtful trustworthiness and so easily influenced.

The sun came up at last on a familiar scene. Cuevas recalled that strip of solitary coast as he had seen it a year before. But at that time the beaches had been marked by groups of Indians, and the sea in front dotted with fleets of canoes that kept plying back and forth between the caravels and the shore. Now, not a boat, not an Indian, not even a curl of smoke among the trees to suggest the presence of a bohio. Don Alonso gazed at Fernando aghast. Alarmed now in earnest, the Admiral ordered a boat ashore, and Don Alonso, not less anxious to be at the bottom of the mystery, set out in his long

boat from his own vessel taking Fernando as a guide acquainted with the ground.

Yes, here was the site of the blockhouse they had built from the timber of the wrecked flagship; but now it was only an area of rubbish—bits of charred wood, a few boxes, a few hogsheads broken in, shreds of cloth—all that was left of garments worn by Spaniards—the traces in short of a thorough-going destruction.

A few Indians appeared at the edge of the forest and stood looking on; but they disappeared the moment they thought the Spaniards were observing them. Again the Admiral ordered broadsides from his vessels and signals of musketry. Perhaps the survivors of the garrison were somewhere in the neighborhood and would eventually appear. But unbroken silence followed the echoes of the guns.

They waited a whole day in the vain hope of an answer from the white men on shore. Finally Columbus himself landed. He remembered that he had ordered Diego Arana, the cousin of Beatrice his concubine, in case of danger to bury such gold as he might have collected in the ground under the fort. Sailors began digging about in the ashes of the blockhouse. The well was reopened and bailed dry. But none of the gold-filled hogsheads of which the Admiral had dreamed were anywhere to be found. What the sailors did find, instead, as they made their way in groups into the neighboring forest, were some eleven skeletons, for the most part stripped of flesh but with sufficient clothing and traces of beards to make clear that they were Spaniards.

Finally a number of Indians took courage and approached. They knew a few words of Spanish. In fact,

they pronounced the names of several men who had been left under the orders of Diego de Arana. Little by little, with the help of Diego Colon, the story of the catastrophe was patched together with many gaps, many contradictory or unexplainable details.

In the first place, Cuevas was astonished to hear the name of Pero Gonzalez. Some Indians, to be sure, did not mention him in their stories; but others referred to him as the principal cause of what had happened. He had not died from the poisoned arrow in his throat! In time he made his way back to the camp and got well again. But soon he began to quarrel with Diego de Arana. He and Escobedo, the third in command, refused to take orders from the Admiral's natural cousin. It seemed to have been a question of women. Gonzalez and Escobedo had numerous wives; but they wanted more, taking them by force from the native villages. Finally, attracted by stories they had heard of the mines at Cibao, they deserted the fort with as many men as would go with them, and set out in quest of the king of that country—the famous Caonabo, whose name, being translated, meant “The King of the House of Gold.”

Caonabo indeed they had found, but this Indian Sovereign was a Carib by race. First he put Gonzalez and Escobedo to death along with the companions of those gentlemen. Then he assembled an army of braves and fell upon the fort at Nativity.

At the moment of the attack only ten men were actually within the block-house which Arana, the Governor, with no thought of danger, had left quite unprotected, not even taking the trouble to post sentries. The other members of the garrison had long been living in bohios



outside the fort with the Indian wives they had taken. They did not know of Gonzalez's rash adventure inland, nor the rage he had aroused among the natives by his harshness in dealing with them.

The white men in the bohios were slaughtered before they had had a chance to take up their arms. Eight of them reached the shore, but drowned themselves in the sea rather than fall into the hands of the Indian warriors who were pursuing them. Guahanacari, the "king," had done his best to defend his guests; but the natives of Hispaniola were not men of war. The terrible Caonabo soon put them to flight. The "king" himself had been wounded and his "capital" burned to the ground.

The following day the Admiral learned that "King" Guahanacari was lying sick in an Indian village nearby. A Spanish scout had discovered him there stretched out in a hammock and tended by seven of his wives. Columbus assembled the captains of his fleet; and dressed in their most formal costumes of silks and brocades, or else clothed in their full armor for war, they set out to pay a visit to the "court" of the chieftain. As had been his habit a year before, this friend of the Sons of Heaven began shedding abundant tears, describing in signs and groans the terrible things that had happened at Nativity and his own efforts to defend the Spaniards. Rising from his hammock he began to limp eloquently about, complaining of the pain in his wounded foot. It occurred to the Admiral to offer the assistance of the surgeon from the fleet; but when the Spanish doctor removed the bandages he could find no trace of a wound, though His Majesty uttered piercing shrieks whenever the ankle was touched.



Some of the Spaniards concluded that the "king" was inventing the whole story, that at any rate Guahanacari was an accomplice of Caonabo. Father Boil, a sturdy Catalan, urged the Admiral no longer to be deceived by this tear-straining Indian. But Columbus pointed to the ruins of Guahanacari's "capital" where indeed all the bohios had been burned. On the worst hypothesis, why punish this Indian sovereign for his perfidy? That would only increase the friction and frighten away the natives who were again crowding about the Sons of Heaven, but with less reverence and fear than at the time of the First Voyage.

Later Guahanacari returned the visit to the Admiral at the latter's ship, and he found there ten native women whom the Spaniards had rescued from cannibals on an island just previously discovered. One of them already had been "converted" and had accepted baptism under the name of Catalina. The "king" fell in love with Catalina at first sight and allowed her to know as much even during their one short interview. Indeed, after this visit from the "king," there were many signs of intelligence between "His Majesty" ashore and the Indian women aboard the Spanish flagship. One night when the crew had just fallen into its first slumber and the guards on deck were few, the intrepid Catalina awakened her companions who were sleeping about the deck and though the ship was at least three miles from land and the sea was running high, the ten bronze ladies, trained from girlhood to an amphibious life, threw themselves into the water and swam off vigorously toward the dark shore. The guards gave the alarm and boats put out in pursuit of the fugitives rowing toward a light which had ap-

peared on the beach and was evidently serving as a beacon. Only four of the women, however, were recaptured. The valiant Catalina made good her escape and vanished with the five others into the wilderness.

Promptly at daybreak the Admiral sent an embassy to Guahanacari ordering the immediate return of the refugees; but the chieftain had moved his "capital." His bohios were all empty—not an Indian was to be found.

These mysterious events left the impression that the atmosphere about Nativity was not the best for a budding enterprise of colonization. The black ruins of the fortress, the rough mounds that had been raised over the skeletons that had been recovered, seemed to drape the otherwise heavenly spot with an air of tragedy. Cuevas and Lucero spent many anguished hours about the graves wondering which of them might perhaps belong to Garvey.

The Admiral had been favorably impressed with a site near Monte Cristi. There a spacious harbor, girt about with luxuriant forests and fed by two streams that teemed with fish, was further located, so he had been told by Indians, near at hand to Cibao, the region so abundant in gold. Cibao indeed was none other than a chain of mountains that stretched away along the coast to either hand of the new port.

There the expedition went ashore *en masse*, carpenters and masons leading the way to lay the foundation of the first real city. Everyone was in high spirits at being finally free from confinement aboard the ships. At last the smell of bilge water could be replaced by this wondrous fragrance of the virgin wilderness. The artillery, the munitions, the farm tools, the horses, cows, sheep

and poultry were hurriedly landed, along with great packages of merchandise to be used in barter with the natives.

In less than a month's time Cuevas had seen the town of Isabella take form before his eyes. The church, the warehouse, and the Admiral's residence were built of stone. The houses of the privates, for the most part, were made either of logs cut in the forest or of the cane and mud used by the Indians. They were simple structures of one room, with floors of trodden earth. All worked with enthusiasm during those first weeks: shortly they would be free to go out in search of gold into those mountains that lifted their lofty peaks above the tree tops. The important thing for the moment was to have the city done. It would not take long after that to get the gold together now that the expedition had finally reached Cipango!

But shortly enthusiasms began to wane. These Europeans had had no experience as colonizers. They had not yet learned to control the diseases peculiar to sudden changes of climate and to virgin soils. Almost everyone had suffered much from seasickness and the other hardships of a voyage where salted meats had been the only food. People began falling sick. A warm, muggy climate, an air that seemed over-laden with damp from the rivers and rank odors from the green woods, seemed somehow poisonous to human beings reared under far different conditions in lands of ancient civilization and intensive agriculture. Most of the men, furthermore, had lived their lives as soldiers and were quite untrained for any kind of regular work. Now while building their houses they were tied to irksome tasks from morning to night

and forced to hard labor when rest and abundant food would have been their real needs after such a wearing voyage. To physical distress or illness were added disappointments and depression. How many hearts had been filled with dreams of the rich cities of Cathay fashioned of marble palaces with roofs of gold! Yet here they were living like savages without the elementary necessities of comfort. Even the Admiral, the most buoyant of all, was attacked by fever and confined several weeks to his bed. The Indians were indeed bringing in bits of gold from the interior but in negligible quantities. It was evident to everyone that the precious metal, if found at all, could be procured only by great perseverance and exacting labor.

It was in these circumstances that Lucero's child was born, under the care of a good physician, fortunately, one Doctor Chanca, a famous medic of Seville who had volunteered enthusiastically for this Second Voyage, eager to see the new lands discovered and to visit under the guidance of his friend the Admiral that marvellous realm of the Grand Khan.

Now on this January morning Fernando Cuevas standing in the doorway of his hut was viewing his plight in a mood of mingled hope and despair. What a wonderful country this, beautified by the most marvellous splendors of Nature, seen in one of her moments of most exuberant productivity! And yet, how hostile, how deadly, to men not born on that soil! Swarms of insects, that seemed to have an incredible appetite for white skin, turned night into hell! What chance would there be for this little being, flesh of his flesh, life of his life,

who had just opened his baby eyes on this new found world? Was not Lucero herself in danger, weary as she was from the long journey, and now shaken by the sufferings of motherhood? The young man looked out from his bohio over the city with feelings of uncontrollable alarm. All those people lying about in their rude huts, sick and dying, might they not all perish as the men of Nativity had perished under some sudden attack from those copper-skinned warriors, who were slinking about there in the woods on the mountainsides, in the mystery of that beautiful landscape that turned red as blood as the sun rose upon it, or vanished in a sea of violet as the sun went down?

Fortunately Don Alonso de Ojeda was there. There was no discouraging that sturdy "Knight of the Virgin"; and his invulnerable spirit had its effect upon everyone. There was no doubt in Don Alonso's mind! Had not the Admiral told him they were in Cipango? Beyond a doubt, then, in the interior of the island, near the mines of gold, rich cities would be found, where a man of valor, if he were willing to exert himself, could surely make money and glory for himself!

And another thought crept into the mind of the sometime deck-hand. The way things were turning out, he would probably soon become the proprietor of one of those twenty war horses—fabulous animals for the natives and at once their admiration and their terror. One of Ojeda's soldiers had been wounded by a poisoned arrow in a brush with some Caribs during the voyage among the Leeward Islands. The man was likely to die from one moment to another. In that case, he, Fernando



Cuevas, at last a knight in earnest, would be among the first to ride out into the forests of Cipango. . . . What more could a fellow want?

The bell meantime was clanging from the stone church tower. In the air above his bohio, parrakeets and other birds were whirling about in fright. The air of Hispaniola seemed to be answering the song of this metallic throat in a certain crystal harmony fraught with all the youthful ingenuous beauty of morning in a new world. In the treetops hordes of monkeys peered from among the leaves looking down upon the strange town and listening to this unwonted music with grotesque seriousness.

To be sure, if one had sharp eyes and could see clearly among the lichens and the vines that draped the tree trunks, one might have perceived other figures moving stealthily about. The natives of Hispaniola were likewise awakening to the call of this new divinity in bronze which had been brought to their world by the Sons of Heaven to spread a message, whatever it might be, to great distances through the forests. And a man with such sharp eyes would have seen that they were Indians in long hair and lofty plumage, with painted bodies and painted faces; in their hands bows, arrows, and long spears whittled from hard wood: Indians, in short, of that same tribe which a year before had attacked the landing party from the Fleet of Discovery and had actually tried to capture the page "Andujar" and his companions.



## CHAPTER II

### HUNGER

One afternoon Don Alonso de Ojeda, who had quarters in the stone house occupied by the Admiral, paid a call on Fernando Cuevas. Don Cristobal was still in bed with fever, but worse than that, he was very low in spirits. The vessels in the fleet had now discharged their cargoes and were returning to Spain. The Admiral had figured on reloading them with the huge quantities of gold and spices that the garrison at Nativity would have accumulated. Instead he had found a few piles of rubbish and a dozen skeletons. What would people say in Spain? How pacify the Sovereigns and those who had hailed his discoveries with joy?

"We have got to send something back!" Don Cristobal had said. "There is no doubt that we are in Cipango. There must be cities and better cultivated lands farther inland beyond those high mountains we can see from here. The Indians keep talking of 'Cibao' as a region rich in gold, and the name of that 'king,' Caonabo, 'Lord of the House of Gold,' suggests immense wealth in his possession. I imagine that a march of three or four days inland would bring us to his mines. Couldn't you take a few of your men and make an exploration before the ships set sail? Then if God wills that my hopes be well grounded, the fleet will be able to carry back to Spain

the news that we have at last discovered the golden mountains of the East."

The purpose of Ojeda's visit to Fernando's bohio was to ask the young man to make ready for immediate departure. So Fernando took leave of Lucero, assuring her that the expedition would be gone at the most a week. The young girl was already on the road to recovery, weary indeed, but at the same time strong in a mother's pride in her new-born child. Alonso de Ojeda had acted as godfather at the baptism, bestowing his own name on Alonsico. The most important knights in the new colony were taking special interest in her son as the first white child born in the New World. The Chief Steward of the Fleet kept her plenteously supplied with provisions; and the women who had accompanied the expedition as stow-aways were coming every day to the Cuevas cabin to help her in her care of the child and of the house. Lucero had won them all with her friendly welcome. The uncertainties of this adventurous life in a new world were brushing social inequalities aside, cancelling differences of rank that had seemed so important at the moment of embarkation.

Fernando, for his part, was conscious of an equally important change in his own station. The twenty knights who had volunteered for the voyage under Don Alonso de Ojeda were all younger sons of noble families in Spain, proud of their lineage and of the glory they had won in the wars against the Moors, their sole topics of conversation, almost, the possessions of their parents and the honors bestowed by Church or Crown upon gentlemen of their name. Back in Spain Fernando Cuevas would have been in the eyes of such men just a miserable

squire, the son of a forgotten soldier. Here he was a veteran of the First Voyage who had witnessed that marvelous adventure in the intimacy of the Admiral. Here also he was the son of a hero who had died fighting the Moors. His story, as he could tell it in this new environment, made his family look as noble as the houses of the other knights. In fact he felt himself as much the *hidalgo* as anyone else. If he, along with the others, looked up to Don Alonso as a superior, it was because of the personal admiration and respect that fiery warrior inspired.

The party set forth the following morning, the bellicose captain attended by six of the young knights, whom he was now calling his brothers-in-arms. They were all mounted on their Andalusian steeds, huge muscular war horses with long manes and tails, their bridles hung all about with bells. The continuous tinkling of these along with the metallic clank of the armor gave the eight men and their chargers a most imposing aspect. The natives surely would regard them as divine centaurs come down from heaven—miraculous animals, half-man, half-beast, who now could fight in one piece as single individuals and now break apart and fight as two.

Ojeda could hardly contain himself in his joyous expectation. For days past his head had been in a whirl of warlike enthusiasm, that mingling of jealousy and emulation which creeps into every courageous heart when it finds another valorous soul competing with it.

“We have had enough of this fellow, Caonabo, the king of these mountains. The Indians keep talking of him as though he were going to swallow us in a mouthful.

Let's take a ride out into his territory and see what really happens to us!"

The adventurers struck southward straight inland from the shore, and the sea was soon lost from view. During the first two days the marches were short and difficult. The Spaniards had to force their way through a dense wilderness following imperceptible trails left in the undergrowth by the bare feet of the natives. As for human beings, not a soul! Even such Indians as dared continue living near the colony built by the white men took to their heels at sight of these men of iron mounted on animals such as one might have imagined only in dreams, and which made a tremendous clangor as they trotted along, or from time to time set the virgin forest ringing with their strange whinnies.

Toward evening on the second day Don Alonso and his comrades reached the foot of a high mountain chain, and picking their way up the steep slopes managed to reach a sort of plateau. There they passed the night. When the sun rose the following morning they looked down on the other side of the hills upon a great plain dotted with clumps of vegetation and sprinkled with villages, between which the river "Yagui"—the stream called by Columbus the River of Gold—meandered on its way to the sea. The horizon beyond the plain was closed by another chain of mountains.

Descending into this earthly paradise Ojeda and his knights came to thickly populated towns where the natives welcomed them like gods with a respectful and admiring hospitality. They, however, kept straight ahead crossing the Yagui many times, as well as smaller rivers that flowed into it. It was some days more before

they reached the opposite mountains. There could be no doubt of it. They had arrived at last at the golden realm of Cibao! But the redoubtable Caonabo must have been absent on some war-like expedition. Nowhere did he make his appearance to block their progress or much less to devour them. Unfortunately, the inhabitants of this happy country were as naked as the other Indians the Spaniards had seen—all savages in the same primitive stage of existence. There was no trace anywhere of those marble palaces with roofs of gold which Columbus had located in the interior of the island.

To be sure, Ojeda's faith in the learned Admiral was not shaken.

"I don't know whether this is Cipango or not, but I am sure there is plenty of gold here!"

And in fact illusion and reality were blending before the hidalgo's eyes in a sort of dazzling mirage. There was a sparkle about the cliffs of the mountainsides, as though they were shining with particles of gold. As the horses crossed the beds of streams their shoes would strike fire from bits of stone that would seem to be nuggets of pure metal. The Indian knew the art of separating these shining particles from the mineral that encased them and would offer them in barter. Gold itself meantime was abundant enough. The Indians had no particular esteem for the precious metal and they had left untouched the deposits which had washed down from the hills in the course of the ages and gathered among the cobbles of the water courses. In crossing one stream Ojeda picked up a nugget of unworked gold that weighed nine ounces.

"And we have not begun yet!" he said, his eyes glowing covetously. "Wait till we have time to dig about



in the caves and crannies in the hills. But to do that we will have to come back some other time. We are just looking around now!"

The nugget indeed seemed to supply the news for which Columbus was waiting; and since the Admiral was impatient to send the vessels home again, Ojeda made haste to return to Isabella.

Inclined from the outset to attribute the greatest magnificence to the lands he had discovered, Columbus could only take heart again at the reports of a young captain as imaginative and optimistic as he. And the drooping spirits of the colony also rose at the tales of gold which Cuevas and the other knights brought back from beyond the mountains. The season was propitious for the return voyage and Columbus made haste to dispatch a large part of the fleet, retaining only five vessels for service about the colony. He sent the gold nugget and other samples of the metal brought back by Ojeda along with specimens of curious fruits and plants. If this was a light cargo for such a great fleet, the Admiral added the ballast of long letters in which he described the beauty of the island and made new promises of a later dispatch of vessels loaded to the waters' edge with gold and spices. To be sure he asked with great urgency that fresh supplies and munitions be forwarded to him at once.

The fact was that more than a thousand souls were huddled together at Isabella, unaccustomed as yet to live off the land as the natives were doing. Provisions from Europe were beginning to grow scarce. Great quantities of wine had been lost during the voyage because the hogsheads had not been filled with a view to the high



temperatures of the tropics. The colonists needed more food, more medicine, more clothes, more weapons. Most of all they needed horses, mules, draught animals. And since the Admiral could not buy all such things with the nine ounce nugget Ojeda had found, he proposed in his letter to the King and Queen that he be authorized to hunt such Indians as were cannibals and send them to Spain to be sold as slaves (baptizing them to be sure beforehand). In this way the royal treasury would be reimbursed, the islands would be freed from the terrible Caribs, and the true Faith would win multitudes of converts, their souls rescued from the Devil by force of arms!

The day when the fleet set sail for Spain was one of great sadness and discouragement at Isabella. As the vessels dropped from view, homeward bound, hundreds of human beings found themselves at last face to face with Adventure. Here now in a land beautiful but inclement they stood abandoned, sick for the most part and underfed, placed on rations of food as on a ship at sea or in a fortress under siege, and compelled to do work which few of them had ever done—soldiers who had sailed from Spain in the hope of acquiring each his little kingdom, but now compelled to toil as carpenters or farm-hands without so much as a square meal. Some of them had sold everything they owned in Spain, their lands and their houses, to come on this voyage, thinking it a matter of weeks at the most before they would be wealthy in the lands of the Grand Khan. Now all they could see was a future of poverty in a wilderness much worse than the Spain they had left behind, among strange peoples without clothes who possessed none of

the comforts of life, indeed, had no conception whatever of luxury.

Doubts were arising on all hands as to the promises the Admiral kept making. Was he not, after all, the "big talker" people had thought him to be in the days when he was called "Don Out-at-Elbows"? Where were his marble palaces, his roofs of gold? Where those grand courts with armies of elephants? And to think that many of these hidalgos had used all their influence at Court to be enrolled in the expedition, while others had actually stowed away at the risk of being hanged at the yardarm in order to win some share in the great pile of gold which that dreamer had seen beyond the Ocean!

Columbus did his best to justify himself. Hadn't he warned them at Cadiz and at Seville before the fleet set sail that the enterprise was not that jolly escapade which many seemed to think it would be? Gold? There was plenty of gold—only it would take work to get it! And the Admiral was right, though he also was forgetting that he was a man of tremendous imagination, that on returning from his First Voyage he had published most glowing accounts of the wealth of the new lands. Crowds of people easily succumb to the enthusiasm of the moment. They do not take so readily to the corrections and modifications that one tries later on to add. Cuevas was conscious of a growing animosity among the Spaniards against the Admiral. He and Lucero continued to preserve the admiring respect they had always had for him—the colonists on the whole were a lazy incompetent lot of day-dreamers! At the same time this throng of sick and over-worked individuals were more than right in

the complaints they were making in voices ever louder that the Admiral had deceived them.

To arouse the low spirits of his colonists, Columbus decided, the moment he had recovered from his illness, to make a great expedition into the mountains of Cibao. During his absence his place as Governor would be occupied by his brother Diego. Cuevas could see that Don Diego was a good-natured, well-meaning man, but given to talking too much in words more distinguished for sincerity than for opportuneness. He was by all odds the least intelligent of the colonists. He continued to go about the town clothed in his sacerdotal vestments and his secret ambition was that his influential brother, Don Cristobal, might succeed in procuring his appointment from the Sovereigns as Bishop of All New Found Lands.

The greater part of the population of Isabella set out on this march into the interior. The Admiral had thought of building a fortress somewhere in the neighborhood of the mines; so he took with him all the builders and skilled laborers in the town, leaving behind just enough men to guard the stone ramparts. Four hundred men formed the body of the expedition—an enormous army under the circumstances, considering the nature of the island and the superiority of the Europeans in arms. Don Pedro Margarite, a Catalan nobleman, who had joined the Second Voyage as field commander, rode at the Admiral's side.

They set out from Isabella with banners waving and to the music of trumpets and the beating of drums. Crowds of natives gathered to look on at this marvellous spectacle. Ojeda rode ahead with his knights as an advance guard. But when they came to the foot of the

mountain chain the rough ground played havoc with this martial array. It was now a question of climbing along narrow trails which blocked the passage of the men carrying supplies or weapons. It was nothing like the light armed foray executed by Don Alonso and his companions. Here Ojeda and his men, accustomed already to mountain warfare against the Moors, moved courageously ahead to open a road—the first road of the New World, and Columbus, ever encouraging and ever rhetorical, named this path across the hills the “Pass of the Hidalgos” in honor of the knights who had cleared it.

As he looked down from the plateau upon the beautiful plain beyond, the Admiral decided to call the latter the Vega Real (“Royal Valley”). He marched into the numerous towns, one by one, in the same warlike array in which he had set out from Isabella. Again the natives were astonished at sight of the horses, which were more numerous on this second expedition; and they could not contain their astonishment every time the fabulous centaur would break in two, as a knight dismounted, only to come together again as the rider returned to the saddle.

At the base of the mountain chain beyond the valley the Spaniards had to halt. They had consumed their supplies of bread and wine and the mules had to return to Isabella for more. They were not yet accustomed to the foods of the Indians which they were to find, in the end, so nutritious and so tasteful. The mountains in front of them were bald and forbidding, the trees few and stunted. While water was abundant in some places, it was completely lacking in others. This, however, was as it should be! Land is hardly ever fertile in the neigh-

borhood of mines; and the adventurers, furthermore, could console themselves with frequent bits of gold! It was not only what they found themselves. When the natives of the mountains observed that the white men seemed to set great store on this yellow metal, they willingly gave them what they had, and joined in the hunt for more along the beds of the streams.

At this point Columbus decided he would go no farther. As he figured it they were now seventy-two miles from Isabella and communication across two mountain chains would be very unsafe. It was wiser to build his fort on the spot where they were, leaving a garrison to work the neighboring mines and explore the rest of Cibao. He selected a hill that jutted out into a river and was accordingly protected on three sides. There he built a blockhouse, with a deep ditch in front on the side away from the river. At that moment the Admiral had a touch of good-humor: he called the stronghold "Doubting Thomas" because that Apostle had been able to believe only the things he saw with his eyes and touched with his hands. At last his men had seen the gold of Cibao and were able to touch it with their fingers! Natives were coming in from all sides with flakes of gold and tiny nuggets which they were willing to exchange for the most absurd trinkets. And since all these copper-skinned savages were blessed with great imaginations they were highly pleased at the attention paid their every word by these beings of celestial origin, and told the most marvellous tales of nuggets as big as oranges, of nuggets as big as a man's head, of nuggets as big as their bodies, that could be found only a short distance farther on—always farther on, to be sure, always farther on!



When Columbus reached Isabella on the return with his troops he found the people who had been left there in a worse plight than at the time of his departure. The heat and the abundant rain were working miracles in the fields that had been planted—already at the end of March one farmer came in with samples of wheat which he had sown at the end of January. The sugar cane, the grape vines, and the many vegetables that had been brought from Spain were growing bountifully. But the heat and the humidity were proving intolerable to human beings. Hardly a man but was sick or exhausted. Buildings that had been planned were standing unfinished. Work in the gardens had halted. Meantime the supplies brought from Spain had spoiled and rations already inadequate were still further cut. Gentlemen who had hitherto refused to work and had always been going about in expensive costumes were now constrained by circumstances to take the places of farmers or artisans who were sick. Many of them had not been thinking of money in making this voyage to the lands of the Grand Khan. They had dreamed rather of living as knights-errant in fairy lands of the East, executing marvellous deeds of prowess like the paladins of the story books. Yet here they were degraded from rank as chivalrous heroes to the station of the ignoble serfs they had been wont to despise in Europe.

At the same time Columbus was eager to continue his exploration by sea. He knew that Cuba was not far away and that land he had always regarded as the most easterly point of Asia. One way of bringing succor to his unhealthy colonists would be vigorously to prosecute his search for the Grand Khan to the westward. Who



could tell? Perhaps a few days' voyage might bring him into one of the great ports of Asia! Again, on the 24th of April, he entrusted the city to his brother Diego and set sail, taking with him the celebrated pilot, Juan de la Cosa, who had served him so well on the First Voyage. Coasting along the "peninsula" of Cuba they would be sure sooner or later to strike continental Cathay. With a view partly to checking the spread of disease in the colony, and at the same time to give more tangible evidence of his ownership of the island, he ordered the troops to be scattered about through all the interior. Don Alonso de Ojeda would garrison the blockhouse at Saint Thomas with fifty men. The rest of the army would explore the province of Cibao under command of Don Pedro Margarite, and then proceed to occupy the whole of Hispaniola.

He put to sea well knowing that his brother Diego, despite his ostentatious devotion to the humilities of religion, was at open war with Father Boil. The moment the Admiral was out of sight Margarite, for his part, thought it useless to undertake the hardships of a march about the island; so he sat down with his troops in the villages of the Vega Real, where the air was cooler and where the soldiers began to break discipline and lead lives of voluptuousness and violence. Things went so far that the army ceased to exist as an organized body, the soldiers breaking up into small parties and roaming the country at will in search of gold.

Don Diego Colon tried to intervene in all matters, in spite of his recognized incompetence in every way. But though he was nominal chief in the absence of the Admiral, Margarite paid no attention to him. Father Boil,

strong in his title as Apostolic Vicar, likewise thought himself under no obligations to this clerical apprentice who was trying to lord it over the colony. Columbus had sailed with three caravels, one of them the old *Niña*, renamed the *Santa Clara* for the Second Voyage. The other two vessels remaining from the original fleet were full-riggers which he had considered of too great draught for exploration about coasts and rivers. Margarite and the Vicar General seized these two ships and deserted with many other malcontents, determined to return to Spain to bring charges against the Admiral, showing that he had made false reports and that the lands he had discovered had nothing to do with the rich empire of the Grand Khan.

Cuevas and Lucero were not present at these disturbances in Isabella. They were away with Don Alonso in the blockhouse at Saint Thomas. Ojeda had yielded to the importunities of his young friend who was eager to be in the neighborhood of gold. What was there to do at Isabella? Was he not now a father with all the obligations of a family? At the blockhouse he could spend his time exploring the mountains of Cibao and—who could say?—make a lucky strike! As for Lucero, his wife was almost the soldier he was. She would naturally come with him. They could carry Alonsico in their arms!

Ojeda's company was the only one that still maintained discipline and obedience to its chief. Margarite's soldiers were spreading terror about the island by their atrocities. The natives were fleeing, whenever they appeared in numbers, or were attacking them when they found them in small groups. Caonabo, the most feared of

the chiefs of the island, had hitherto remained on the defensive: he had nowhere been seen. But now the moment was evidently ripe for him to exterminate these new invaders, as he had done with the garrison at Nativity.

Caonabo was almost constantly on Ojeda's mind as perhaps the one Indian worthy of measuring strength with him. Little by little he had learned Caonabo's story from one native or another in the lands already conquered. The dread chieftain had come to Haiti on a warlike expedition and had decided to settle there. A man of athletic stature, irresistible in hand-to-hand conflict, and of great shrewdness as a strategist, he had had little difficulty in making elbow room for himself and settling down in the valley of Cibao, maintaining his independence undisturbed and winning fearful respect from the four chiefs who governed the rest of the island. His men, like himself, were fierce warriors, quite different in temper from the other inhabitants of the island for the most part inclined to peace and gentleness.

"He has many wives," said Ojeda in describing this doughty personage to Fernando, "just as Guahanacari has; but his favorite, his real queen, is a woman named Anacaona, and they say she is a pretty girl, unusually white for a woman of her race and of very great intelligence. She did not like the idea of marrying this barbarian whose tastes were quite other than her own—she likes music and has even composed songs which the Indians call *aeritos*. Her people know when she is about from the perfume she leaves behind her. And furthermore, she is disinclined to wars. But her brother, Chief

Behechio, who is 'king' over another region of the island, had to give her to Caonabo to save his lands from invasion."

Many times as he walked about in the solitudes of the mountains of Cibao or paced back and forth in the blockhouse at Saint Thomas, Don Alonso would forget the ambitions which had brought him to this new world and his thoughts would go drifting back to Spain.

"What can Doña Isabel be doing now?" he would say to Cuevas. But then he would add with bitter irony: "I imagine she thinks of me in some great hall of the Palace of the Grand Khan, dressed in gold and pearls. Perhaps she is even jealous, fearing lest the King of Kings be marrying me to some princess of his family! . . . What if she knew the truth!"

And turning his back on the river and on the great clearing that had been opened in front of the fort, he would look sadly out upon the desolate slopes of the Cibao range.

But his preoccupations as a man of arms gave him little time on the whole to worry about what Doña Isabel might be dreaming. He noticed, among other things, that the Indians who had been coming to barter with his garrison were growing rarer and rarer every day.

"That Caonabo fellow—" he said one evening to Cuevas, "I have never met the man, and yet I feel him all around our blockhouse! He may be over there behind one of those hills waiting for night to come to fall upon us. I feel him, I say! I've got him in my bones! It is as though someone had told me about it—maybe the Virgin! You know, I keep her with me all the time. I commend myself to her care every night. We mustn't

forget poor Arana and the fort at Nativity. It's stupid to trust these naked heathen. Even the best of them, those that are ready to shed tears at any moment, are capable of turning on you on the slightest provocation."

It was indeed as though the devout hidalgo had been miraculously warned by the little image which he carried at his belt wherever he went. That very night Caonabo attacked the blockhouse. All of a sudden the clearing in front of the fort seemed to be swept by an inundation of naked, painted, copper-skinned flesh that made the air hideous with its blood-curdling yells. The "Lord of the House of Gold" had assembled a force of ten thousand warriors, armed with stone axes, bows and arrows, lances of hard wood tempered in fire. Many of the Indians were his own subjects; but others came from the various kingdoms of the island which had secretly united to repel the Whites. Silently they had made their way through the mountains and the forests to appear in the dead of night before the blockhouse at Saint Thomas that lay isolated in the middle of the island. The wily Indian chief had observed that the bulk of the Spanish force had scattered here and there. He had hoped to take the garrison by surprise.

The surprise, however, was his own. He found before him a chief quite as indomitable as he, just as contemptuous of death, and even more astute. The men in the fort were on watch and the moment the painted and feather-decked army appeared in the clearing the side of the blockhouse seemed to blaze with fire. The Spaniards opened with their muskets, and the single brass cannon they had brought from Isabella thundered in the night. Caonabo's troops took to their heels before this



murderous lightning hurled by the Sons of Heaven. But the chief understood that he could not match his naked warriors against such weapons. With the garrison on watch it would not be possible even to cross the ditch. He decided to reduce the fortress by hunger, and distributed his army through the neighboring woods, occupying all the passes in order to intercept such provisions as Indians had been bringing to the garrison to barter for trinkets.

The siege was to last for thirty days and Ojeda had to use all his resources of courage and ingenuity to thwart the stratagems of the Carib chieftain. Fernando felt great concern during the first days because of the presence of Lucero and his little son; but the courageous girl was accepting all the vicissitudes of this life of adventure, favorable or unfavorable, with the adaptation peculiar to her race. Many times she would take her place at Fernando's side on the tower of the watchhouse, her eyes upon the dark line of forest where the Indians were hiding. And while little Alonso would be sleeping in a room on the lower floor, Lucero would be practicing with her husband's weapons. Ojeda would sometimes laugh aloud at hearing the girl voice her determination to "die fighting" in case the fort should fall. In reality she was living better than the other defenders of the blockhouse. An extra portion of the provisions of salt meat which had been brought from the colony the commander had laid aside for her in view of her status as a woman and as the mother of a nursing child.

But eventually provisions began to run low and Ojeda made frequent sorties, fighting in the open field. Cuevas always accompanied him on such adventures and he be-



gan to believe the commander was really invulnerable by virtue of some supernatural power. This man of slender stature had a contempt for death. He led every attack and strong in his unparalleled quickness of foot he would take on any number of Indians at one moment, killing or wounding them tirelessly. Time after time Fernando saw him fall to his knees under the sheer violence of the blows which the enemy warriors would rain upon his shield. But never once did he really fall. In a second he would be on his feet again, renewing the attack. Almost all the soldiers who took part in these encounters would come back again with wounds more or less important. Ojeda never suffered the slightest scratch. No one had ever drawn his blood!

These sorties were directed against the bohios and temporary shelters which the besieging Indians had erected in the neighborhood. There oftentimes supplies in considerable quantities could be obtained. Caonabo, himself, was keeping out of sight. In spite of his renown as an invincible warrior he did not venture to meet this white-skinned hero whose head barely reached the shoulders of an ordinary Indian, but who seemed nevertheless to have some charm against the arrows that were hurled upon him. Caonabo saw in the Spanish leader a supernatural being who was living under the protection of heavenly spirits. Meantime the besieging army itself was gradually wearing away. Some of Caonabo's best warriors had fallen in battle; but, in general, the Indians were unaccustomed to the slow-moving operations required by a siege. One by one they drifted back to their villages and finally the "Lord of the Golden House" himself retired, astonished at the feats of this man

whom he was now calling "The Little White Chief."

The victory of the Spaniards somewhat restored their prestige among the Indians. One day a friendly native came in and requested an interview with the commander of the fort. He brought two wild pigeons as an offering to the wonderful Son of Heaven, hoping to obtain in exchange some object—a bell, a fragment of a mirror, or a bit of crockery—which had been touched by the marvelous white men. Don Alonso took the pigeons and straightway offered them to the young mother—the fresh food would be a great relief to her. But she refused the gift. That day she had been the only one of the fort who had eaten, and that too thanks only to provisions which Don Alonso had laid aside for her. No, she replied, Don Alonso should eat the birds himself—he deserved them, since he had saved all their lives!

The friendly dispute was taking place in one of the rooms of the tower and a number of the young knights stood looking hungrily on. The commander gazed at them for a moment and then said gravely:

"It's a pity these two little birds are not enough for all of us. But I cannot eat myself while my men go hungry. Supposing we divide equally!"

And stepping to a window he threw open the shutters and released the two pigeons which disappeared in rapid flight.

## CHAPTER III

### THE LORD OF THE HOUSE OF GOLD

It was many months before the Admiral returned to Isabella and he had long been given up for dead. His brother Bartholomew, whom he had not seen since their separation in Portugal before the First Voyage, had come on to the New World and was awaiting him in the new city. A sturdy, hard-muscled individual, endowed with great strength of will and given to dominating the people whom he encountered, Bartholomew was to prove much more useful than the other member of the Colon family, the pious and not very intelligent Diego. Bartholomew in fact, was in many ways the counterpart of his brother Cristobal. The latter had learned to conceal his deeper-lying harshness and selfishness under a studied politeness. Bartholomew, rather, was inclined to be brusque and arrogant, but at any rate, straightforward.

When news of the Admiral's arrival reached the block-house at "Doubting Thomas" Ojeda transferred the command to one of his lieutenants and hastened back to Isabella with Cuevas and the latter's wife. Once more the young people found themselves in the bohio they had learned to call home; and thenceforward they were frequently to welcome as their guest at table a man who soon became a beloved friend—Señor Juan de la Cosa. The famous sea captain was a quiet, home-loving soul. He

missed the family he had left in Spain, and sought something of the atmosphere he longed for in the house of Fernando and Lucero. The provisions which had been brought from Spain were now all but exhausted—the bulk of them indeed had spoiled. But Lucero with her usual adaptability had watched the Indian women and learned most of the native art of cooking. She could make cassaba bread and various dishes of Indian corn. Observing that the iguana, the great lizard that had caused such terror to the Discoverers in Cuba, was much prized by the Indian notables, she had begun to serve that delicacy on her own table, along with other little quadrupeds from the not very lavish fauna of the island, which she could dress and season in native style. Juan de la Cosa enjoyed certain privileges as a master pilot and would secure bottles of Madeira from the colony stores to cheer these meals that were eaten often in the open air in the enclosure behind Fernando's bohio.

The mariner had many stories to tell of his recent voyage with the Admiral. On this trip they had made but one new discovery, an island that was later to be called Jamaica.

"We passed most of our time," said the Captain, "exploring the southern coast of Cuba. The Admiral is more and more convinced that Cuba is part of the mainland and at the point where it joins the Continent he hopes to find the Straits (Malacca) that lead to the Golden Chersonese. Not only that, when he reaches the Straits he intends to keep right on so as to encircle the globe and give the King and Queen of Spain the surprise of seeing him return from the East around Africa."

The Admiral, in fact, eagerly questioned the natives

of Cuba through his interpreter as to the whereabouts of the Grand Khan. Some of them did not understand; others, characteristically disposed to know everything, pretended they knew him very well but spoke of him as a potentate who lived far, far away, always to the westward. They could even describe the subjects of the Grand Khan—people who dressed in long white tunics and went to sea in big boats. These references to the elaborate civilizations of Yucatan and Mexico served to confirm the Admiral in the illusion that the opulent and populous cities of Asia were close at hand. At one place the natives pointed inland and talked of a wonderful country called Mangon. Don Cristobal thrilled with sanguine expectation. Mangon could only be Manguì, the richest province of the King of Kings!

By sheer force of repetition the Admiral's dreams laid hold on some of his men. A sailor came running down to the shore one day after an exploration in the Cuban forest, shouting and waving his hands in great excitement. Looking out over the country from a tree top he had spied a company of human beings walking in procession and dressed in white from head to foot, like friars in the churches at home. Such a report from that wilderness peopled with naked savages could only have been the product of an over-excited imagination. Vainly the Admiral plunged into the woods hoping to come upon envoys of the powerful Asiatic monarch. Juan de la Cosa, for his part, was inclined to think that the sailor in question, groping nervously forward in the mysterious penumbra of the forest, had perhaps seen a flock of storks or cranes walking solemnly about the shores of some pond in search of food.

"Our three little boats," the Captain continued, "were making water badly and we thought it wiser to get back to Hispaniola. But before starting out on the way home the Admiral asked us each to sign a formal declaration which he could show on his return to Spain to combat the doubts raised by navigators and scholars as to his reaching the Coast of Asia. They were saying that he had stumbled on a world entirely new. This in his opinion was absurd."

After sailing more than a thousand miles along the coast of Cuba the Admiral thought it impossible that land of such extent could be an island.

Juan de la Cosa continued his story with a smile of pity:

"Finally he sent the Fleet's Scrivener with four witnesses to each of the vessels, to question every soul aboard, down to cabin boys and deck-hands, and see whether any of us doubted that the land in sight was Asia. We all, of course, declared that Cuba was not an island but belonged to the Asiatic continent. After the scribe had obtained our signatures the Admiral added a note at the foot of the document in which a penalty of ten thousand *maravedis* was laid upon any captain or pilot who should later repudiate his declaration. If the unfortunate recanter happened to be a common sailor, he would receive a hundred lashes and have a red-hot nail driven through his tongue."

Five years later at Cadiz, Juan de la Cosa was to make his famous map of the New World—the first chart of the future America. On it Cuba appears as an island. Even at that late date Columbus and his friends were still insisting Cuba was the easternmost point of Asia.



What the pilot did not know at that time was that if a look-out had chanced to climb the masthead at the point where the affidavit was taken he might have sighted the western point of Cuba and a new stretch of open sea beyond. Columbus was within two days' sail at the most of rounding the westerly cape when he turned back. As the event proved he was to live to his dying day believing that his first guess had been correct.

After describing the beauty of a little archipelago which the Admiral had named "Queen's Garden," the Captain continued:

"I was anxious to continue westward in the hope that we might make some one of the many ports known to exist on the east coast of Asia; but suddenly, Don Cristobal fell ill. He lost his memory and the sight of his eyes, and finally lapsed into a deep coma that was very like death. That obliged me to take command of the three caravels and I thought it my duty to hurry back here. Don Cristobal did not regain consciousness during the whole voyage home, and when we landed him and he opened his eyes here in the Stone House, the first person he was to recognize at his bedside was his brother Bartholomew."

The greater comforts and the better care possible in the Governor's residence at Isabella soon brought the Admiral back to his pristine energy and determination. His greatest worry now was the enemy chieftain Caonabo. "King" Guahanacari had finally turned up again, notwithstanding his very dubious conduct on the occasion of the Admiral's return to Nativity. Now he had come to complain that he was in trouble because he had refused to join the confederacy of natives against the

Whites. In reality he was trying to avoid taking sides until he should see which of the two parties would prove the stronger. Don Cristobal thought it most important to capture Caonabo. With that courageous warrior under control peace could be established on Hispaniola. At the same time he could think of no possible way of attaining such an end. Caonabo was holding forth in the mountainous regions in the center of Haiti, a country virtually inaccessible because of its broad streams, its tangled forests, its lack of anything resembling roads. To meet this shrewd chieftain on his own ground, where he could lay one trap after another, was equivalent to inviting disaster. And yet as he recovered more and more from his illness the Admiral could think and talk on no other subject.

Don Alonso de Ojeda lived in a house adjoining the Governor's residence and he was a frequent visitor at the Admiral's bed-side. The young hero of Granada was equally preoccupied with the famous Indian chief. But in Ojeda, doubts and hesitations were of short duration—his thoughts became actions in the thinking.

One day Fernando saw his captain standing in front of his house and engaged in animated though circum-spect conversation with the pilot, Juan de la Cosa. The sturdy seafarer, so methodical, so leisurely, so quietly thoughtful in everything he did himself, found a strange fascination in this impetuous fighter who did not know the meaning of the word "impossible" and was completely stranger to any fear of death. But this time the laconic seaman could not suppress various monosyllables of astonishment as he listened to what the hidalgo was saying. Fernando's first inkling of the subject of their conver-

sation was an order he received from his superior:

"Have the horses and the other things ready for tomorrow morning. We are going out with a few friends to pay a call on His Highness, Señor Caonabo."

The fact was that Don Alonso had promised the Admiral to bring in the Lord of the House of Gold, dead or alive. He had not the slightest idea as to how he was going to do it; but he had talked the matter over with someone who knew—his mistress and patroness—the Virgin in his locket! She was agreeable! She would find some way to arrange things! There could be no doubt as to the outcome of the adventure.

"You see," said the foolhardy man-at-arms, as he expounded his plan to Cuevas, the person closest in his confidence, "you see, we've got to find the fellow—run him down in his own house! Then She will tell us what to do next!"

The following day a platoon of ten knights rode forth from Isabella, the youngest and strongest in Don Alonso's company, all of them in helmet and corselet and armed with strong lances. As for the Virgin, whom Ojeda regarded as the most trusty individual in the whole expedition, he had tied Her securely to the pommel of his saddle, to counsel rashness or prudence as the case might require.

They rode two hundred and forty miles through a wild country never before explored by white men toward a village which had been named to them as Caonabo's "capital." The Indian chief offered no resistance to their advance, thinking it unlikely that such a small platoon of enemies could be coming with war-like intent. As they drew near to their goal, the Knight of the Virgin un-

wrapped a bundle which he was carrying, produced a magnificent plume which he added to his helmet, and drew over his corselet an over-vest embroidered with cloth-of-gold. An ambassador should make worthy appearance before a "king"!

On the outskirts of the village, six of the knights drew rein while Cuevas and two others went forward with Don Alonso to the shelter of palm branches under which the Lord of the House of Gold was waiting to receive them. Through an interpreter who had learned a few words of Spanish in trading with the garrison at "Doubting Thomas," Don Alonso paid profound respect to his valiant enemy, treating him with the deference he would have shown a sovereign in Europe. When the interpreter's competence failed, Ojeda came to the rescue with a few short phrases he had picked up himself. Between the two, they managed to impart that the expedition came on a friendly embassy from the Admiral, the *guaniqui*, or "great chief" of the white men, and that he, Ojeda, was bringing a gift of incomparable splendor.

Cuevas, meantime, was examining the famous "king" as he sat there on a sort of throne fashioned from a tree trunk. Caonabo was a tall powerful savage, the muscles standing out in rolls on his arms and thighs which were copiously painted with designs in color. His hair, which he wore long, was gathered in at the back of his neck till it looked like a horse's tail. Strings of teeth and colored stones were hanging about his loins and down over his breast. His slanting eyes, which seemed to give an expression of subtle intelligence to his face, were never fixed on the Admiral's ambassador—it was the "king's" prerogative not to look at anyone!

Yet suddenly the monarch forgot himself and turned his eyes full upon Ojeda in irresistible curiosity. He had seen the Spanish knight in combat before the block-house at Saint Thomas and he had learned to admire his prowess in battle. How quick of motion, how light of foot, this pale face—priceless qualities in a man of war! The young hidalgo must have seemed all the more wonderful to the savage chieftain because of the supposed protection he enjoyed from mysterious and omnipotent spirits!

Caonabo spoke in his turn, expressing with a primitive chivalry evident enough assurances that he was pleased at this visit from the Sons of Heaven, that Ojeda and his men would be welcomed with cordial hospitality, that they could feel secure so long as they remained as guests in his dominions. And he showed them quarters in one of the great bohios which rose around a stretch of open meadow.

Left to themselves there Cuevas and Don Alonso looked out from their rustic lodge upon the throngs of copper-skinned savages that were going and coming about the "court" of Caonabo. There were three brothers of the chieftain, as sturdy of build and as strong of muscle as he. Now and then in the doorway of the royal bohio women of his retinue could be seen going back and forth. His wives or concubines could easily be recognized: they were sumptuously adorned in feathers and necklaces and their bodies were heavily painted. Dinner time was at hand. Many young girls, not in regal trapping, were hurrying about bringing wood and water or tending the fire.



"Where can the beautiful Anacaona be?" said Don Alonso.

The two young Spaniards were very curious as to this, the favorite, of Caonabo's wives, famous throughout the island for her beauty, her gentleness, her distinguished talents, her gifts as a poet and a composer of songs. The barbarous environment in which her lot had been cast could only lend fascination to such a person in the eyes of these Europeans. But during all that day and those following the Spaniards saw no trace of the Indian "queen." They began to suspect that perhaps she had gone home to her brother, the chief, Behechio.

Weary from a three days' march the Spaniards slept soundly the whole night. But the following morning Ojeda had another interview with this enemy who was also his admirer, and he did all he could to induce the "king" to return with him to Isabella.

"Tell His Highness, Señor Caonabo," he ordered the interpreter, "tell him it would be wise for him to make friends with the Spaniards. Tell him that if he will return with me to pay a visit to our 'big chief' we will give him the bell in the church at Isabella. I make him that promise, and so it will be."

Ojeda knew the sensation the bell had caused throughout the island. Indians had been coming from the most distant points of Hispaniola, making marches sometimes of days and days to hide in the woods near the new town and hear the clanging of that marvellous, brazen vessel. The savages had observed also that whenever the bell rang the Spaniards all began walking toward the church. They had concluded that the bell was saying something and that the white men were obeying its words.



Everything that seemed to have some heavenly property about it was called "turey" by the Indians; their bell was "turey," "turey" the white men also.

"*Turey, campana, ding ding,*" said Ojeda to the savage monarch, smiling unctuously and joining his two hands in expressive gesture. "You come *conmigo* and big chief he give *turey*."

The "king's" eyes glittered covetously. He had himself gone to Isabella to hear the bell, and he had long scouted about the city with numbers of his men in the hope of catching the Spaniards napping and somehow gaining possession of the miraculous instrument. Now on learning that this heroic warrior, so small of stature yet so terrible in combat, was offering him such a gift as a pledge of peace, he accepted eagerly, unable to contain his joy. As the interpreter translated the king's reply, Ojeda thrilled with expectancy, though he did his best to hide his feelings.

"The Lord of the House of Gold," the interpreter explained, "says that tomorrow at sunrise he will return with you to visit your big chief in his city on the sea-shore."

At dawn the following morning Ojeda and his nine companions mounted their horses to escort the chief and his retinue. But to their astonishment they suddenly saw Indian warriors coming in from all sides armed with bows, arrows, spears, and lining up in great companies as though about to depart on a military expedition. Still speaking through the interpreter, Ojeda could not refrain from asking why Caonabo was taking such a huge army on a friendly visit. The chief replied with a certain stiffness:

"Caonabo says that a king as great as he cannot go anywhere without an army worthy of him."

Don Alonso was alarmed. Whispering to Fernando who was riding next to him he said:

"Stratagem is the best weapon these people have. Perhaps he thinks he is making fools of us, and that by going in our company he may surprise Isabella and capture the Admiral with all the rest of us."

Nevertheless it was too late to turn back now, nor could Ojeda withdraw his promise. Part of the native army was already on the way scouting through the woods in advance of the main body. Suspicious as always, the Indian chief indicated to the centaurs in steel that they should ride on ahead. He and his principal warriors had no intention of being attacked from behind.

"We must make the best of it!" whispered Alonso. "My Virgin will stand by us! I am sure She will tell me what to do before sundown tonight."

As the Spaniards trotted slowly along at the speed fixed by the great companies of savages afoot, the young hidalgo continued imparting his doubts and his worries, turning around in his saddle to consult with Cuevas who was riding behind him along the narrow trails.

"I am bringing him back with me all right, but I've caught more fish than I can fry. In trying to remove one danger I am creating a greater one. These fellows were safely away in the center of the island. I am inviting them into the house. It was the Admiral's idea to get hold of the king but without starting a regular war. What do you think the Virgin has in mind? How are we going to get out of this?"

They camped at the end of the first day's march near

the mouth of the great river that eventually crossed the Vega Real. The following morning before the march was resumed Ojeda paid a visit to Caonabo, taking with him a pair of handcuffs so perfectly polished that they were like burnished silver.

"*Turey*," he said, "*turey*, from heaven! Heaven is the place we call 'Spain.'"

Fernando was with his commander as usual, and he had to hold his sides from laughing as he heard the young hidalgo resort to jests that had a touch of irreverence at a moment so critical. But Don Alonso, still talking through the interpreter, went on to explain that the kings of Spain wore these wonderful bracelets only on occasions of great ceremony, and that he had brought them as a worthy gift for a monarch so powerful. However, he said, these ornaments from heaven were of such sacred character, that the Spanish Sovereigns never put them on without first undergoing a purification. If Caonabo would go and bathe in the stream he would be allowed to try the bracelets, and then have a ride on Ojeda's horse. In that way he could leave the water with the pomp used by the kings of *turey*. It would all make a great impression on Caonabo's subjects!

It was hard to say whether the savage chieftain was more dazzled by the gleam of the handcuffs or by the joy and pride he felt at seeing himself in his mind's eye riding on one of those animals which his Indians respected and feared and which no native hitherto had ever dared approach. Quite readily, without taking any precautions whatever, he accompanied Ojeda and the nine Spaniards to the river bank, inviting only a few of his closest counsellors to attend him. For that matter, with

so many hundreds of his own warriors in the neighborhood there was little to fear from this handful of white men!

Don Alonso had explained his plan to Cuevas earlier in the morning. Fernando trembled with uneasiness as he watched the development of this stratagem which only a man of Don Alonso's recklessness could have devised, and which seemed to have a thousand chances of failure to one of success. As he figured it out, in just about an hour he, Don Alonso, and the others in the Spanish company would be frizzling on spits over the mess fires of that copper-skinned army.

Cuevas had dismounted from his own horse for the ceremony of purification in the river. When it was over he helped Caonabo get astride Don Alonso's charger, the young hidalgo himself remaining in the saddle.

"Now the handcuffs," Ojeda commanded tersely.

And Fernando locked the shining manacles about the wrists of the Indian chief who accepted the pressure of their cold steel as a high honor to his majesty as king.

This "ceremony" over, Ojeda spurred his horse to a gallop and began riding up and down in front of the lines of savages. How wonderful for them to see their chief mounted on one of those wonderful animals, his wrists shining with an ornament worn only by the kings of *turey*! This gave Cuevas time to regain his saddle, and soon he was galloping about with the other Spanish knights as though forming an escort of honor in Caonabo's rear. The "king," for his part, sat gravely on his charger immeasurably flattered at so much glory; and the Indian warriors would cheer and cheer as their leader came riding by, shrinking back in terror, as the horses

advanced upon them, to escape any contact with such terrible beasts. Round and round the squadron galloped in circles ever larger, as though performing a methodical evolution. Soon Don Alonso had cleared a great open space bounded by hundreds of admiring savages.

But at a certain moment instead of continuing round the circle Don Alonso turned his horse into the neighboring woods:

"Come, come, all of you; the ropes, the ropes, Fernando!" And he disappeared with the Spaniards into the woods.

Once among the trees and out of sight of the savages, the Spanish knights gathered about Caonabo, pressing their lances and sword points against his breast, ready to kill him if he made a stir. Cuevas leapt lightly from his horse and drew from under his coat some rope which Don Alonso had given him that morning. The Indian could not move his hands because of the handcuffs. Cuevas soon had his feet securely tied together under the belly of the horse, while another rope passed around his waist held him securely to Ojeda's body. Don Alonso touched his spurs to his steed and was off down a trail through the woods. The others followed. Soon again in the saddle and racing at great speed, Fernando rejoined the company deep in the forest.

The ease with which his captain's stratagem had been executed he could never have foreseen. And yet the danger was by no means past. Cuevas was to remember that return journey to Isabella to the end of his life as one of the most extraordinary of his adventures. They had still over two hundred miles to go, now across lands entirely desert, now through thickly populated plains



dotted with villages of hostile Indians. Caonabo, to be sure, could not escape, nor was anything to be feared from his army which had been left far behind and had no means of overtaking them. But they might be assailed at any moment by the Indians through whose territories they were passing.

It was a tense laborious march lasting over a week, with little time for sleep, with never enough to eat. They had to cross many streams. The more open roads through the forests had for the most part to be avoided since probably they led to Indian towns. When at times it was absolutely necessary to traverse a village, they would charge ahead at full gallop, their lances in rest before them. Finally they rode triumphantly into Isabella, Don Alonso carrying the terrible chief behind him tied to his body as though part of himself.

The Admiral was astonished at the feat performed by the Knight of the Virgin and looked with the greatest interest at the Indian chief who sat passive and unmoved before him as though none of the accidents, good or bad, of this life could make the slightest impression upon him. The heroic Carib maintained a haughty demeanor before the big chief, refraining from any act of submission, and replying in contemptuous silence to threats of punishment for the attack and massacre at Fort Nativity. Finally he began to boast of having destroyed that fortress and vowed he would have done the same by Isabella had he not been halted by the courage and craftiness of the Little White Chief. Toward Ojeda he showed no rancor whatever for the stratagem which had led to his capture. The boldness and ingenuity of the ruse only increased his admiration for the little



Spaniard. Native wars on the island were usually conducted through ambushes and surprises carefully prepared and courageously executed. In the eyes of this Indian gentleman the man who had marched into the heart of a hostile kingdom with nine men and carried off its king under the eyes of thousands was a hero among heroes.

However, the Admiral was afraid that such an important captive might escape. He placed Caonabo in a room in the Stone House, the Indian's hands still manacled in the gleaming handcuffs that had led him to his undoing. The building was not a spacious one. Everyone who came to consult the Admiral could have a look at the chief as he sat there a prisoner. Cuevas was assigned to guard him during the daytime and in the absence of Diego Colon, the Indian interpreter, he was able to make use of his increasing vocabulary in the Indian tongue to talk to the captive. Most often he would be attended by notables in the colony, who, whenever they had nothing of importance to do, would come to hear over and over again the details of the capture. Caonabo would sit in disdainful silence on a cut of wood which had been given him for a stool, his hands manacled behind him.

Don Cristobal stood much on formalities and titles and always insisted that they be scrupulously observed toward him. Whenever he entered a room all present were expected to rise to their feet and doff their caps in salute. This rule the Spaniards all followed, but Caonabo never. Though the Admiral often entered the room where he was, the captive would sit motionless, for the most part looking at the ground; and if his eyes did chance to rest

on the Big White Chief it was with an expression of contempt. But one day Don Alonso de Ojeda came to the Stone House on a visit to the Admiral, as it happened without armor or arms. The Captain was much shorter than the other men about and Fernando was not aware of his presence, till suddenly, to his surprise, he saw Caonabo rise to his feet, and make a bow in Indian fashion before his conqueror, smiling cordially the while:

“But the Admiral is our ‘Big Chief!’,” Cuevas remarked later. “Don Alonso has to obey him.”

Then for the first time the morose Indian deigned to break his silence, and with such an expression of heroic pride on his face that no one could mistake his meaning. The Big White Chief had never dared to venture into his kingdom to take him prisoner! He owed that misfortune to the Little White Chief! The Little White Chief, therefore, and not the Big White Chief, would have his reverence!

## CHAPTER IV

### QUEEN GOLD FLOWER

Caonabo's capture roused the whole island to hostility against the Spaniards. One of the brothers of the Indian king, Manicaotex by name, a man equally resourceful in war, came to an understanding with the other tribes of Haiti for a general attack upon the invaders. Even Anacaona the Beautiful, the favorite wife of the prisoner, induced her brother Behechio to enter the native coalition with all the forces of the rich district of Jaragua, the most densely populated of the island. Guahanacari, treacherous and weak as always, was the only one to remain on friendly terms with Don Cristobal. Though his services could be of no great importance in case of war, he did keep Columbus informed as to what was going on.

The continued illness of the Admiral left the defense of Isabella and the Fort of Doubting Thomas to Don Alonso de Ojeda, since he knew the country and the character of the Indians better than Don Bartholomew. Four boats had come in from Spain with cargoes of provisions and sailed away again with a remittance of Indian slaves to be sold on the Sevillian market. More abundant food revived the spirits as well as the physical strength of the Europeans, and many of the sick were now recovering. The Admiral himself began to feel better, and on hearing that the allied chiefs were assembling great

forces on the Vega Real, some two days march from Isabella, with evident intent of an attack upon the colony, he resolved to take the offensive and fight the enemy on their own ground.

He found, however, that he could marshal no more than two hundred men aside from the small company of twenty horse commanded by Ojeda. His firearms consisted of the so-called espingards, a sort of portable cannon which were either mounted on wheels or else carried by the soldiers and supported on iron props when they were fired. To be sure, the white men had armor and shields which partly compensated for the slenderness of their number; but victory was by no means certain in view of the enormous superiority of the Indian forces, especially should their courage and tenacity be as great as Caonabo's. A new instrument of warfare, not unknown in Europe, was now available for Columbus. The boats had brought from Spain a large pack of Andalusian mastiffs, ferocious animals, bought from the mountaineers of Central Spain and trained for fighting. These dogs were almost as terrifying to the Indians as horses had been. Hispaniola, as well as Cuba, had a small native dog of gentle disposition which, among other peculiarities, was unable to bark (this animal was destined to become extinct, since the Spaniards hunted it mercilessly during periods of famine, and came to regard it as an exquisite food). As for the mastiffs, they had been trained to leap upon a man, pull him to the ground, and then tear him to pieces with their fangs. They were particularly dangerous to the Indians, whose naked bodies offered no protection against such fierce attacks.

The little army set out from Isabella in the month of

March, 1495, advancing into the interior at about ten miles a day. The rough ground did not allow of greater speed. Again they reached the plateau beyond the so-called "Pass of the Hidalgos" and could see at their feet the wide plain of the Vega Real. But now the Indian villages were so many encampments, and naked warriors were hurrying in from all points of the island at the call of conch-horns and Indian drums. The nervous imaginations of some of the Spaniards made the strength of the opposing forces even greater than it really was.

"They say there are a hundred thousand of them down there," said Cuevas who was riding at Don Alonso's side in advance of the foot soldiers.

But the fiery hidalgo simply shrugged his shoulders. There might be a thousand thousand—it would make no difference! He saw no danger in these multitudes of naked men who would come rushing forward with great cries, throw their spears or shoot their arrows, and then drop their weapons and take to their heels the moment the Christians charged them. It was in fact difficult to estimate their numbers. They seemed to be everywhere, shouting, whooping, hurling their darts, but then scattering to cover in the underbrush. They were in fine fettle, doubtless because of their great superiority in numbers. They thought the moment come for exterminating the whites through this general alliance, not having learned as yet that there were plenty of other white men where these came from. They must have been equally embarrassed at computing the strength of the invaders. They could count in their language only to the number ten. After that they would pile kernels of corn together, each kernel representing a soldier, and estimate the im-

portance of an enemy regiment by the size of the pile the kernels made on the ground. Indian scouts followed the Spanish company in its every move, skulking from rock to rock, from tree to tree, as the invaders advanced. At appointed times they would run to the headquarters of Manicaotex and the other allied chieftains and lay down handfuls of corn. Such reports caused great mirth among the Indians. They could not understand the rashness of the whites in assailing the huge army of the Indians with such a ridiculously small force!

The Admiral met the Indians on ground that was later to know the town of Santiago de los Caballeros. Detachments of infantry under command of Don Bartholomew marched off in different directions under cover of the woods, blowing their bugles, beating their drums, and discharging their firearms. It was this uproar, especially the flashes of lightning and the claps of thunder which had the power of dealing death, that caused a first confusion in the copper-skinned multitudes. But when Alonso de Ojeda and his horsemen charged at full gallop, leaping with lowered lances into the compact masses of the foe, the retreat became a rout. However, the dogs were upon the Indians before they could escape, each catching and strangling his man and tearing him to pieces. In their inexperience and terror the Indians imagined the horses were equally ferocious, equally thirsty for human blood. Shortly groups of Indian warriors could be heard calling from the hilltops asking mercy of the Spaniards and reproving their chiefs for the rebellion. The Indian confederacy collapsed. Each of the "kings" made off toward his own territories followed by



his men and thence began separate negotiations for restoring peace and good relations with the Sons of Heaven.

Columbus, however, was mainly concerned with gold and he took advantage of the general discouragement among the natives to organize, if possible, sources of regular supply. The "kings" were ready to give cotton and corn and offered to devote vast regions hitherto uncultivated to the production of such tribute. But the Admiral wanted to see the Indians all at work in mines or in sluiceways to be built on gold-bearing streams. Ojeda rode far and wide into the interior with his cavalry imparting the commands of the Big Chief to the Indians. And for a moment the results looked promising. The tribes gave up such stores of gold as had accumulated in their various families in the course of generations; but all told the amounts thus gathered proved to be of no particular importance and the Spaniards attributed this scarcity of metal to the disinclination of the natives to work. Finally the "kings" proper were obligated to deliver a pumpkin shell full of granulated gold every three months, while heads of families were assessed enough gold dust to fill a bell. Ojeda laughed cynically with his companions at these provisions:

"The bells they were so anxious to get when we first came here are now the measure of their servitude!"

One day the intrepid hidalgo received a visit from an old Indian squaw who came with a message from "Queen" Anacaona. The squaw in question had lived for some time among the whites at Isabella in the first days of the colony and had picked up a certain number of

Spanish words. She had probably acted as a spy for Caonabo during the fighting, thereafter returning to the service of his favorite wife.

Anacaona was still living in her husband's domains; but she was eager now to re-establish peace between her brother-in-law, Manicaotex, and the Sons of Heaven. That purpose accomplished it would be her desire, according to her envoy, to retire to the fair lands of Jaragua ruled by her brother Behechio, where she had been born. If she applied to the "Little White Chief" rather than to the aged *guaniquimo* who ruled at Isabella it was because of her admiration as a woman for the courage of this lord of the men-horses who went about clothed with fire, glittering like a river in the sunlight, and was now a man walking on his two feet like anyone else, and then again was respliced to his horse making one divine animal with the latter! Anacaona was not angry at the capture of her husband: indeed, she admired the subtlety with which the Little White Chief had outwitted the King. As the aged squaw hinted, Anacaona had never loved the Carib chieftain who had gotten possession of her by force. She regarded his misfortune as her liberation. Caonabo was a harsh, cruel barbarian, given to violences and frequently stealing the wives of chiefs weaker than he. If he had treated her at all well it was due only to the fact that she was sister to the King of Jaragua who was strong enough to avenge her if she came to any harm. Would the Little White Chief not consent to an interview with her in one of the richest and most comfortable villages of her husband's kingdom? The Indian army had dispersed after the defeat on the Vega Real. Her brother-in-law was still in flight. The

Little White Chief would talk with her alone; and the messenger allowed it to transpire that Anacaona, for her part, was eager for a closer view of one of those warriors come from heaven of whom everybody had been talking but whom she had glimpsed hitherto only fleetingly and from far away.

Don Alonso's companions saw in this invitation a stratagem devised by Caonabo's wife to square accounts for the disaster to her husband; but with his usual hankering for danger, the young captain was only the more eager to accept in proportion as the dangers of doing so were emphasized to him. At the moment he had only eight men with him since the other knights were busy riding up and down the Vega collecting the first tributes. Taking the old squaw and a small detachment of friendly natives as guides the little party set out into the wilderness. It was two days' march to the village which Anacaona had designated. There they found her occupying one of the best bohios. Ojeda was shown to another, equally pretentious, which rose on the edge of the clearing that served as a sort of public square for the village. He took Fernando along with him as his squire and confidant.

The two men were soon convinced that there was no immediate danger. At the moment the village was inhabited for the most part by women and children. Either the men were still in the mountains with Caonabo's brother or else they were afraid of showing themselves in the presence of these celestial warriors who had killed so many of their comrades in the disastrous combat on the Vega Real.

The "Queen" announced her visit for the morning

following their arrival, and at the time appointed she appeared surrounded with all the ingenuous and barbaric pomp which the "kings" of the island had developed about their "courts" and which she had embellished with her more "civilized" tastes. It was no longer a case for the Spaniards to make ingenious negotiations to receive the favor of her interview, as they had had to do in reaching Caonabo months before. "Queen Gold Flower" was coming to them like one of those queens enamored of knights errant in the marvelous tales of chivalry they had read.

Standing in the shade of their bohio, their six comrades about them, they saw the queen approaching on a litter carried by four sturdy Indians. The barbaric cortège was preceded by four musicians blowing on conches or on rude horns of bark decorated with colored strings ending also in conches. Behind these marched another troop of men waving palm tufts and other broad leaves to keep the insects from Her Royal Highness. The litter itself was covered with a mattress of fragrant grasses and the queen, seated comfortably upon it, was slowly and deliberately waving a great fan fashioned of colored feathers, the ensign of her royal station. Bringing up the rear of the procession, came a company of Jaraguan maidens famous for their beauty, who attended the queen wherever she went.

All the women, the queen included, copiously painted with circular designs that wound about their breasts and arms, wore short aprons of dyed cotton which covered their bodies in front leaving them completely naked otherwise. Anacaona had long flowing black hair parted in the middle and gathered into two long queues that

shone with a fresh anointment of native perfumes. On her head was a crown of red and white flowers, and bracelets and anklets likewise of flowers adorned her arms and legs. The women in the cortège were carrying platters of woven fiber, some with little piles of granular gold, others with roasted dog, parched corn, or cassaba bread, which would be eaten at the banquet the queen intended to serve in honor of her guests.

As the white men stood there, their steel corselets and silken doublets gleaming in the sun, they could only look upon these girls, selected for their beauty and for the very lightness of their skin, through a fog of sensuous emotion. In their eyes these women were as white and as beautiful as any they had seen in Spain. Cuevas for his part gazed at the queen with rapt admiration. Like most of the Spaniards who had landed on these new shores he felt an instinctive respect for natives of the ruling classes. All Europeans in that age of Divine Right had been trained to regard kings and queens with superstitious awe as somehow different from the rest of men, and such feelings they carried across the ocean with them, transferring them to the copper-skinned sovereigns of the New World. To be sure, they would kill an Indian monarch if he happened to get in their way; but their instinct was to respect him. For Cuevas, Anacaona was a real queen; and his companions felt likewise. Don Alonso himself blushed red at the majestic bearing of this beauty of the Indian forests. One of the young hidalgos in the company, who had been a student at Salamanca before turning to the career of arms, compared her to the nymphs that used to rise from brooks or emerge from tree trunks to welcome the heroes of ancient poems.



Anacaona was a sort of august Juno come down from Olympus to bear her greetings to them as did the Juno of old in the tales of Virgil.

Cuevas felt a strange tremor course over him as the eyes of the queen, after a rapid glance at Ojeda and the others, finally rested on him in insistent gaze—black slanting eyes with long thick lashes, too thick if anything, standing out in sharp contrast with the white moist eyeballs. Hitherto he had felt a certain repugnance at the beast-like nakedness of the Indian females; but the nudity of this beautiful queen almost as white as a Spanish girl, aroused in him a disconcerting uneasiness that betrayed the stirring of his senses. He lowered his head and turned his eyes aside as though abashed at having dared to gaze upon sacred royalty.

Fernando was still a boy of eighteen; the other knights were young men also—Ojeda was twenty-one and his companions not much older—but that difference of a few years marked the gulf that separates adolescence from the more seasoned temperament of youth. That rough colonial life with all its hardships and dangers had made these youthful Spaniards grown men far older than their years. For one thing, they had let their hair and their beards grow, as fashion indeed was permitting even in Europe under the influence of the humanists who had so much admiration for the bearded antiquity of the Greeks. These striplings in their early twenties were so many hoary patriarchs.

Whereas Fernando showed, at the most, a light down on his upper lip, like the texture of velvet that gathers over a piece of green fruit in presage of its ripening. He had grown during these months on Hispaniola—he



had grown like a weed, as though the plethoric fertility of that soil which urged trees and plants to gigantic size had also worked upon his animal organism. There he stood, his two hands clasped over the pommel of his sword, full grown, tall, sturdy, the steel corselet about his breast and the iron collar about his throat forcing him willy-nilly to stand upright. That same scholar in the company who had seen a Grecian nymph in Anacaona had often compared him to a portrait of Saint George which he had seen wrought in glass in the window of a cathedral at home—a Saint George resting on his laurels after destroying the dragon that lay prostrate at his feet.

The royal cortège came to a halt and Anacaona alighted from her litter to enjoy a closer survey of the Little White Chief who was such a wonder at arms. Cuevas observed that as she spoke she never ceased waving her fan of colored plumage which to him seemed a most appropriate sceptre.

Difficulties of language straightway interposed between these naked women with their garlands of flowers and the eight Spaniards clothed in their armor of steel. Nevertheless, with some stammering, the aged servant woman managed to explain that Anacaona desired to live in peace with the Big Chief and all the other white men in the town that had grown on the seashore. In the name of Caonabo and the brother who would succeed him in time she would concede anything that the envoys might ask. She herself begged permission simply to withdraw to Jaragua that she might live with her brother in the distant lands that lay to the West. There she would procure the submission of Behechio, though the white men

had never yet entered the lands of that king. Meantime, the *tureys* come from *turey* could consider everything in the village where they were being sheltered as their own.

"This, Anacaona, the Gold Flower, Anacaona the Queen, bids me say. . . . Are you satisfied?"

The old squaw fell silent at these last words and began fussing about the litter to be sure the bearers lifted it carefully after the naked queen had resumed her seat. Then the cortège withdrew with the same music of horns and conch shells with which it had come, the same palm leaves and branches moving back and forth like fans, while the flower-decked queen continued cooling her face with her fan of colored plumage.

The banquet provided for the eight Spaniards was an abundant affair of roast fish, roast dog, native fruits and vegetables. Cuevas and a few others who had grown accustomed to the ways of the country regaled themselves on the flesh of an iguana which, despite its clammy and repugnant exterior while alive, they thought finer in taste and texture than chicken. After the meal was over, three of the men went to sleep their siesta in their bohios while the other three stood guard over the horses which were turned loose to graze in a meadow on the banks of the stream. Fernando was left alone with Don Alonso.

The young hidalgo was much preoccupied with Anacaona and could talk of nothing else, calling her always, "Flor de oro," her Spanish name, and recalling everything that he had heard about her. The age of this naked beauty was hard to guess—the Indians always counted badly and were never quite consistent in their arithmetic. Ojeda thought she could not have been more than twenty-eight. According to accounts, Caonabo had married her

when she was considered very young in that country where girls were given husbands at the very dawn of adolescence. Anacaona was the mother of but one child, a girl some ten years old. "Gold Flower" at any rate, was still in her prime, and Caonabo's enemies reported infidelities on her part which she had permitted herself as revenge for the brutality of the Carib hero. Such offenses, to be sure, were not regarded among the natives as seriously as they might have been among the Christians. The Indian chiefs normally lived polygamous lives, renewing their harems at the end of every successful raid. The women for their part seemed to know no moral restraints aside from fear, passively submitting to new husbands as the fortunes of war determined. On the whole the natives attached little importance to conjugal fidelity.

"They are a bit unsettled in most of their moral ideas," said Ojeda. "All of them, for example, steal. You remember that shortly after we came to Hispaniola the Admiral cut off the ears of an Indian chief who had been caught stealing. It did no good. They steal by nature—and they take women as readily as they take other things!"

Then the Knight of the Virgin launched into praises of Anacaona's character, refraining from any mention of her physical charms perhaps because the plastic details of that naked beauty were still all too present in his mind. It was her refinement that impressed him most, her fondness for flowers and perfumes, her soft voice well adapted to the songs for which she was famous, the fascination she felt for the miraculous—it forced her to admire the white warriors even though she regarded

them as oppressors of her race. Cuevas observed that perhaps for the first time in a whole day since they sailed from Cadiz, Don Alonso made no mention of the Isabel he had left in Spain and of his hopes of marrying her the moment he returned home.

"A pretty girl, this Indian queen," exclaimed the young hidalgo as he stretched out in a hammock at Fernando's side. The afternoon was turning hot and muggy—and both of them were sleepy in spite of themselves. "A very pretty girl! And she doesn't seem to be cross at me at all for what I did to Caonabo. I shall have to return her visit, perhaps this very day—but later in the afternoon when the sun goes down a bit! Then, perhaps . . . then, perhaps . . ."

Ojeda had fallen asleep; and soon Cuevas also closed his eyes, yielding pleasurably to that sense of fatigue that comes with approaching slumber.

But suddenly he awakened, he could not tell how long afterwards—it may have been a few moments, or it may have been an hour. At any rate, the triangle of light that stretched out over the ground from the entrance of the bohio seemed to have changed its position a little. But the triangle darkened; and as he rubbed his eyes he could distinguish the outlines of a woman's head that was peering into the hut and inviting him to come out with sly movements of the eyes. It was the old squaw who had served the Spaniards as interpreter.

Without knowing just why he should be so cautious, Fernando slipped from his hammock and went to the door on tip-toe in order not to disturb Don Alonso who was snoring roundly. The woman began whispering in

his ear in words that seemed to come from her lips in a sort of irregular pant:

“Queen wishes come! . . . You! Threw stone to wake! Come!”

Still without knowing just why he did so, Cuevas made ready to follow the interpreter. He tip-toed back into the bohio and reached for his sword and helmet—the instinctive precaution of a soldier suspicious in an insecure environment. But that was not all: his inborn respect for royal authority made him careful of appearances. Anacaona might belong to an inferior race and know nothing about Christianity, but that did not make her a queen one whit the less!

He followed the squaw through the twisting trails that were the only streets the village had, the huts and stockades sprinkled about at the caprice of their builders. The sun was still high in the heavens and the only sound to break the silence of that sleepy hour smothered under an oppressive heat was the continuous omnipresent humming of insects. Cuevas thought it fortunate that he had laid aside his corselet before dinner and left it in his wigwam along with his shield. At the moment he seemed to be the only man about in the village: there could not be the slightest danger.

The squaw directed him through the opening in a stockade beyond which opened a broad stretch of level ground with another stockade. Once through the latter they came at last to a huge circular bohio with a conical roof, much like the great tents Fernando had seen in military camps at home.

It was a second before Cuevas could accustom his eyes



to the semi-darkness of this habitation without windows. A strong fragrance of flowers, however, struck his nostrils mingled with other perfumes as of wild balsams or the ointments of a woman's bath. Glancing around he observed that the old squaw had disappeared. But there on the ground a short distance before him, barely distinguishable in the greenish light that filtered through the foliage of the forest and made its way in through apertures in the roof, lay the almost white body of a woman, the head resting on an elbow which in its turn sank deep into a bed of fragrant mosses.

Anacaona the Queen was gazing at him as she had gazed a few hours before. She started to say something, but then changed her mind. That would be useless, of course—the old squaw was not there to act as her interpreter. But then, at length, she did speak, translating her words into the graceful gestures which Cuevas had often noticed in natives of the ruling class, chiefs or medicine-men as they may have been, marvellously expert in the language of mimicry. Would he not take a seat on the ground beside her? And the young man, who had removed his casque in bowing, hastened to obey.

Meantime his mind was busily active. What could Queen Gold Flower be wanting of him? Was she suspicious of the Little White Chief, and turning to him to find some other approach to the Admiral? But in that case why had the old interpreter withdrawn? These speculations answered themselves as soon almost as they were formulated. There he was on the ground a short distance from the Indian beauty. A crown of fresh flowers encircled her hair. The wreathlets that girdled her arms and ankles had likewise been renewed. But the fragrance



of these blossoms from the Haitian wilderness seemed to vanish in another sort of vapor that drew the young Spaniard into a wildly sensuous intoxication. That cinnamon-colored flesh that exhaled the perfume of some heavenly garden gleamed almost white in the tempting darkness of the half-lighted bohio. The air itself was vibrant with a music of seduction. Through the orifices in the thatched roof, and blended as it were with the greenish light that streamed in through the leaves above, came the voluptuous fluttering of wild doves that were cooing and flirting on the roof or in the tree tops. As Fernando's eyes rested upon the woman again it was a new Anacaona he saw before him. She was gazing at him with the same fixed gaze, but her steady imperious eyes, that looked upon others with a feminine assurance inured to conquest, had something less majestic about them now, something more humble, something even tender. Besides she was smiling, smiling as easily and naturally as one of those nymphs of Jaragua who made up her retinue. For once her thick dark red lips, usually pressed tight together in an expression of savage haughtiness, were opened slightly, revealing behind them in the semi-darkness two rows of white strong teeth.

Anacaona the Queen was smiling, but there was an expression of perplexity on her face as though she were struggling to remember something she had lost from mind. But then she brightened, with a flash of almost girlish triumph: yes, yes, the fugitive memory had been captured and brought home!

"Kiss . . . kiss . . . *beso*." She repeated the word, giggling like a child.

She had learned to say "*beso*" from the old squaw,

who had told her many, many interesting things about the customs of the white men. This use of the lips had not yet been discovered by the people of her race. How many wonders these white gods come from heaven had to teach! And she had practiced the caress, a delicious novelty for her, and the word that denoted it; and she had been eager to repeat the experiment with this young *turey* whom a few hours before she had seen rising before her eyes as a heavenly apparition in the company of the rougher soldiers of such fearful aspect who had come to her village.

“*Beso . . . beso . . . !*”

And suddenly, as she added action to the word, Fernando felt upon his lips the warm carnal fragrant touch of this gold flower of the Haitian forest.

Taken by surprise, the young man felt himself caught up as it were in the suction of a ferocious animal-like caress. It was something wild, mysterious, brutish, something wholly in harmony with the new mysterious world about him. And to complete his illusion of being hungrily devoured, two tentacles seemed to reach out in the darkness and wrap themselves about his neck, round, soft, satin-like tentacles, perfumed with a jasmine never before scented by the men of his race. They closed about him, till his breath came hard; and meantime, kisses, kisses from that warm sensuous mouth which were forcing themselves upon his lips as though they were thirsty for his blood!

Helpless yet respectful in the presence of a queen, Fernando tried to defend himself; but as he put forth his hands to repel the embrace, they came in contact with a warm silky body, half erect on its bed of blossoms. In

the half-light the designs painted on Anacaona's breast all but disappeared. There she was, as white as any girl in Spain, perhaps more beautiful than any girl Fernando could have met in Spain. For this wild body had never known clothes such as Europeans wore. Familiar only with the touch of flowers, freshened, hardened, by daily or even hourly baths in the cold mountain streams, it seemed to have absorbed all the glory of the tropical wilderness—it was a garden of paradise made flesh.

The eighteen years of the young man rose in fury like a wild colt touched with the lash. Cuevas forgot who he was and where he was; and as his ardor gained the better of him, he passed to the offensive, sinking his fingers deep into muscles that quivered under his hands, his lips almost bruising the lips that were trying to absorb him in their caresses. His sensuousness had something of the angry violence he had felt at times in his battles with the Indians. It was a wild desire to wrestle with the body that was clinging to his own, to strike it down with the same savage fierceness with which he had felled Indian braves at Santiago.

But for such a struggle his sword was in his way. He had to be rid of it. Anacaona seemed to divine his thought, for the tentacles about his neck and body loosened. He was able to sit up. But then suddenly, as he drew back and was free for a moment of the carnal fragrance and the carnal touch of the proud queen, she seemed entirely to pass from his mind. Another image rose before his eyes: an Indian bohio indeed, but a different one, smaller, poorer, with a play of clear sunlight through open doors and windows; and a woman, also, a woman not so tall as Queen Gold Flower, and without the

latter's savage perfumes, a woman with a pale wan face drawn by sickness and hunger, its two eyes gazing vacantly into the distance as though constrained to follow someone who was absent; and in the woman's arms a little child drawing greedily, noisily, at her uncovered breast, his little fists pressed into his mother's skin—and the baby sucked and then fell asleep in a peaceful satisfaction of appetite which had put an end to its weeping! Lucero! Alonsico! His child, his wife! Perhaps at that very moment Lucero was praying for him, worried at his failure to return! Perhaps she believed him in mortal danger! And he . . . ! Now indeed with a violence very like the fury with which he would have wrestled with a copper-skinned brave, Fernando repelled the naked body before him, threw it back upon the piles of flowers that were strewn over the ground, and picking up the helmet which had fallen at his side, rose to his feet and dashed out through the door.

He made his way through the stockades back into the Indian village which lay spread out under the sun as deeply sunk in slumber as it had been an hour before. One bohio was like every other. Fernando could not remember which belonged to him and his captain. He walked up and down in bewilderment for some time, at one moment finding himself quite beyond the limits of the town. At last however he identified the central square and reached the door of his lodge.

But as he looked in through the triangular doorway he found the bohio empty. The captain was no longer asleep in the hammock. Search for him in the meadow where the horses were grazing and along the trails of the neighboring woods was likewise vain. Cuevas thought of all

Don Alonso had been saying during the course of the day and of the eager interest Queen Gold Flower had aroused in him. Anacaona might well be the cause of Don Alonso's absence! The intrepid hidalgo was as headstrong in his affairs of the heart as he ever was in his military adventures!

Fernando passed the afternoon at the door of his bohio. One by one the men in the company appeared, talked a few moments, and then strolled away, perhaps in search of the Indian maidens who had served as escort for the queen. All of them in passing Fernando's cabin inquired after Ojeda. No one had seen him.

As the sun sank lower behind the trees and the air grew cooler, Fernando rose from his seat. Those two hours of reflection had brought him a sense of quiet satisfaction. He had resisted the charms of the Indian queen! And the thought filled him with a consciousness of strength and self-control. In search of greater cool, he turned his steps toward the river and the meadows that flanked it on either side. But as he approached the stream, he stopped, turned in his tracks, and came hurrying back towards the village.

There near the brook and walking slowly in his direction he had spied Don Alonso and Queen Gold Flower. Anacaona seemed to be using with the young hidalgo the one Spanish word she knew, and translating it with the same gestures which she had so recently practiced with Cuevas. At a safe distance behind the couple, walked the old Indian squaw with a certain air of importance and of pride in a task at last accomplished.

It was deep night before Ojeda came back to the lodge. In the flickering light of a pine torch which had



been tied to one of the props of the bohio, Cuevas saw the young captain approach his hammock, join his hands, and bow his head before the little picture of the Virgin which he had hung on the central post. Don Alonso, humble, abject almost, was whispering his prayers. He was praying for forgiveness: forgiveness from the Virgin who had protected him in his many battles; forgiveness from the girl who was waiting for him beyond the Ocean Sea and who had drifted from his mind during that exciting afternoon.

And the prayer was sincere. In that complex spirit the reckless daring and impetuosity of the man-at-arms was blended with a religious faith as simple as a child's. Cuevas was certain his captain had possessed himself of Caonabo's wife with the violence of a Conquistador, probably without consulting her inclinations, taking her by surprise as he might have an Indian enemy. And the favorite wife of the Carib hero had probably accepted this new warrior more powerful than her husband, in fact her husband's conqueror, with a savage's curiosity, to know what the caresses of a Son of Heaven might be like. And now the poor hidalgo was in a terrible plight. He had sinned against the Virgin. He had sinned against his lady! And what a monstrous sin!

But just before he fell asleep the Knight of the Virgin hit upon a thought that eased his conscience and promised a night of peaceful repose. Anacaona was not one of God's creatures! She had never been baptized! If, therefore, he had wronged anyone, he had wronged just a poor savage, an irrational being without a soul and ignorant of Divine Truth! The Virgin and Doña Isabel would be sure to forgive him.



## CHAPTER V

### DON ALONSO WEEPS

One morning four more ships dropped anchor off the Port of Isabella. They had arrived from Spain at a most opportune moment, bringing new cargoes of supplies for the colony which was again beginning to feel the grip of famine.

The natives of the interior had resorted to a most desperate tactic. Indolent and lazy by nature, their muscles entirely untrained for continuous and effective labor, they regarded as the most oppressive of slaveries the obligation they were under to work a certain number of days every three months in order to pay the tribute exacted by the Big White Chief at the City on the Seashore. At first they had been glad to bring in the grains of gold they found when they saw how much pleasure such little gifts seemed to give the Sons of Heaven. But the moment gold hunting became a duty and involved work, they found it all but intolerable. Living very poorly off the land, the game they caught supplemented with a very hasty and superficial tilling of the soil, they began to complain in their songs and chants of the hard work the visitors were imposing upon them to procure regular harvests. Many of them asked the Spaniards when they were thinking of returning to "Turey." Almost any day, it seemed, the Indians were expecting

the floating forests to spread their white foliage to the winds again and vanish forever beyond the horizon.

But instead of this, new floating forests, more Sons of Heaven, kept coming to the island. The invasion began to look like a permanent occupation. The white men were not building bohios any longer; they were dragging stones down from the hills and raising great caverns—so the natives thought of houses—above the surface of the ground. Forts with the marvelous instruments that spat thunder and fire were now to be found at many points through the interior of the island. Convinced that the Sons of Heaven would never return to “Turey” voluntarily, the natives decided to drive them out by hunger. They began cutting and burning their corn, fleeing from the fertile valleys to refuges in the mountains. When all the corn and vegetables had been destroyed the white men would have nothing to live on and would be constrained to go away.

Though the people at Isabella and the garrisons in the forts were reduced to dire straits they still managed to get along by cruel rationing and thanks to the supplies which occasional boats brought in from Spain. Juan de la Cosa in fact predicted that this new tactic of the Indians would fail.

“They do not understand us white men yet. They do not know that the hungrier a Spaniard gets the harder he is willing to fight, and the more eager he is to suffer himself and make others suffer.”

And the Indians indeed were to experience the most disastrous effects from this new method of warfare. When companies of Spanish soldiers began raiding the interior to make captives in large numbers and force them to

labor in the fields, the natives retreated to the most deserted and inaccessible regions of the island where under ordinary conditions only very few human beings could live off the land. There they suffered cruelly from hunger and as their physical stamina diminished contagious diseases broke out among them. Whole tribes were wiped out and at last the survivors came down to the valleys again for the privilege of fishing in the streams, or of hunting in the woods, awarded them in exchange for work in the fields which they now accepted in humble resignation. This heartrending experience so broke the spirit of the natives that it became possible for a Spaniard to travel unarmed from one end of the island to the other with Indians to carry him on their backs to save him the trouble of exerting himself.

The four caravels happened to arrive when the shortage of food occasioned by the "strike" and flight of the Indians was at its crisis, and they were hailed by the famished colonists with shouts of joy. But the fleet brought not only provisions. With it came a royal envoy, one Juan Aguado, former equerry to the King and Queen, who had been appointed to inspect the colony to see whether the complaints made at court by Father Boil, Captain Margarite, and other deserters from Isabella, were well founded.

As might have been imagined in circumstances of so much privation, malcontents were numerous at Isabella. There were complaints at the over-bearing arrogance of the Admiral, at the harshness of his brother Don Bartholomew, at the absurd ambitions for family greatness evinced, especially, by the half-witted Don Diego. It was charged that favoritism had been shown in the fort-

nightly distribution of rations. The Admiral was generous toward those who courted his favor openly; while such as dared criticize his acts saw their rations either reduced or suppressed altogether.

"The Sovereigns send these supplies from Spain for everyone," said the dissidents. "Their Highnesses foot the bills in our common interest. What right then have the Colons to starve us, disposing of property that does not belong to them as they think best?"

At the moment Don Cristobal happened to be absent in the interior and he was in no hurry to return to Isabella. He was eager to have a talk with the man Aguado: at the same time he feared the interview. The arrival of the royal commissioner had given courage to all the dissatisfied elements in the colony. The native chiefs meanwhile had also rallied around the brother of Caonabo and were sending in complaints against Columbus for things which he had actually done as well as for abuses committed by his subordinates. With these facts before him, Aguado's sense of his own importance increased. He had come simply to investigate; but now he was feeling inclined to set himself up as judge.

However Aguado had finally decided to return to Spain and his four caravels were made ready for departure, when one of those terrible storms, which were later to become familiar as the West Indian hurricanes, suddenly burst, spreading ruin from one end to the other of Hispaniola. The natives could not remember a tempest of such violence. Bohios and houses vanished in the air like so much paper. Forests were levelled as though they had been cut with some gigantic scythe. Three of the vessels anchored off Isabella were swamped at their moor-

ings and went down with all on board. Others were knocked to pieces on the shore or else carried on an enormous tidal wave to great distances inland. For the most part natives and Spaniards were living homeless throughout the island.

This great catastrophe terrified the Indians no less than the whites. Some of them believed that their own gods or protecting spirits had sent the storm as a sign to the "Sons of Turey" to go home again. Others imagined the white men themselves had produced this cataclysm of sea and air to destroy the peaceful life of the island and exterminate its former owners.

The one boat to survive the storm was the *Santa Clara*, in other words, the *Niña*, the little caravel which had made the Voyage of Discovery and was still to make many trips between Spain and the New World. This sturdy little craft outlasted many more pretentious and more costly vessels, and foundered in the end in mid-ocean when her timbers finally fell to pieces from sheer old age.

The Admiral ordered that the *Niña* be repaired and that another caravel to be named the *Santa Cruz* be built of timbers salvaged from the three wrecks. He had decided to return to Spain with Aguado in order to offset any report the Royal Commissioner might make. It would need all his imaginative eloquence to preserve the faith of the Sovereigns in these lands of the Grand Khan which he had not been able to find but which he was still certain lay near at hand. His greatest weakness would be lack of any impressive specimens of Asiatic wealth. He would have little to exhibit save a few golden trinkets taken from one chief or another about the island, and the



usual masks of fishbone painted around the ears and eyes with coatings of very thin gold.

But Don Cristobal's luck stood by him. Work on the two vessels had not yet been completed when the great gold mines of Ophir were at last discovered!

Fernando Cuevas got the story from witnesses who had taken part in it—its hero, a young man from Aragon, one Miguel Diaz, had in fact been a friend of his from the day they met in Cadiz aboard the *carraca* commanded by Don Alonso de Ojeda. Thereafter in Hispaniola Diaz had served as a foot soldier under Don Bartholomew Colon. However, Diaz was a noisy quarrelsome fellow and Cuevas had not frequented him much, preferring as a married man to spend most of his free evenings at home in peace. In the end the man had become involved in a drunken brawl with some other Spaniards at Isabella and had taken to the open country with five companions who felt themselves equally compromised in the acts of violence committed on that occasion.

Diaz had wandered from place to place about the island, finally reaching a little Indian town on the south side of the Rio Ocema where the city of Santo Domingo was one day to rise. That territory happened to belong to an Indian "queen" who straightway fell in love with Diaz, took him publicly to live with her, and made him king-consort with authority over her tribe. But in the end the young Aragonese began to grow homesick for the companionship of people who understood his language. He longed to return to the colony, yet feared to do so in view of the punishment that might be inflicted on him for his crime. His Indian wife divined his inten-



tions and with the idea of attracting the Spaniards to her part of the island she revealed to Diaz the location of certain rich deposits of gold which were an appurtenance of her family. The youth investigated and found that the gold was indeed there. Not only that: the soil of the beautiful valley in question was exceptionally fertile and near by was a splendid natural harbor. Isabella was some hundred and fifty miles away. Diaz returned thither and on learning that the man he had attacked had not died, but was fully recovered from his wound, he boldly presented himself at the Stone House and announced his discovery.

Don Bartholomew Colon set out with a company of Spaniards, crossed the island with Diaz as a guide, and came to the little territory governed by the enamored squaw. Gold was indeed more abundant than in any other region in Haiti, not excepting the famous province of Cibao. The river beds yielded richer siftings of golden grains. There were deep excavations in the hillsides which the Spaniards interpreted as evidence that mines had actually been worked there in days gone by. The climate, furthermore, seemed more hygienic and better adapted for the foundation of a city than the fever-stricken district in which Isabella had grown. Miguel Diaz returned into favor and became one of the pets of the Colons. Later on Cuevas was to see him ruling as captain of the fortress of Santo Domingo, after Don Bartholomew Colon had founded that city, and married to his famous Indian queen whom he baptized under the name of Catalina and made the mother of several children.

On hearing his brother's confirmation of the existence

of mines with traces of former, perhaps ancient, excavations, Don Cristobal revived his delirious geography which at last had tangible data to rest on. No, he was right after all! He had called the island Hispaniola—it was really the Ophir of Solomon!

“My dear brother,” he said, “I believe we have discovered the mines whence Solomon extracted the gold he used in building the Temple at Jerusalem. His boats crossed the Persian Gulf, passed Taprobana, and reached this island which lies off the eastern-most point of Asia—the land that is called Cuba by the peoples hereabout!”

The Admiral saw in this revelation a sign from Providence to justify his return to Spain.

The two caravels were now ready and Columbus made haste to embark. He had expressed his willingness to take back to Spain any of the colonists who might be dissatisfied; and two hundred and twenty of them elected to return. This left five hundred white men in the colony—nearly a thousand had perished in those terrible months. The government of the island he entrusted to Don Bartholomew, conferring on the latter the title of Acting Governor (*adelantado*), and ordering that in case Don Bartholomew should die, the other brother, Don Diego, should succeed him.

Don Alonso de Ojeda was among those who returned, disappointed like the others and having lost all faith in the Admiral.

“With the Colons around,” he said, “there is nothing left for anyone else. They don’t want friends! They want servants or slaves! The next time I come over here it will be on my own account.”

Fernando and Lucero for their part decided to stay at

Isabella. What could they do in the Old World? Most of the people who were embarking were thinking of the next famine or of the next outbreak of pestilence. To such unfortunates, life in Spain, however hard it may have been in the past, seemed a paradise of happiness and abundance. But the young couple found themselves singularly favored in the colony, whatever the general hardship. The fact that they had sailed on the First Voyage gave them a certain distinction among their comrades. The Admiral never forgot his former page, Lucero, and was always moved to tears at thought of her romantic story. The other two Colons regarded Fernando and his wife as two of the most reliable partisans of their family. But more than anything else Cuevas had been impressed by the good fortune of his friend Diaz. He had come to these islands of Asia on lookout for just such a fortunate adventure. Wouldn't something equally exciting happen to him some day?

"I should like to follow Your Grace," said Cuevas to his captain, "but I have a wife and a child and I think it wiser to remain here, especially now that the Mines of King Solomon have been discovered. For that matter, I am sure we shall soon be seeing you again yourself."

Ojeda nodded. He had not abandoned his intention of seeking fortune in these lands of the Grand Khan; but he was tired of working under the orders of other people. He was a much better soldier than Don Bartholomew, for all that the latter treated him as a mere subaltern! He would come back, but on an expedition commanded by himself!

The two caravels set sail for Spain on the 10th of March, 1496, the Admiral in one ship, Juan Aguado in

the other. The Royal Commissioner had been treating Don Cristobal very haughtily, and the latter had felt it necessary to be rid of him. In addition to the crews and the two hundred and twenty returning colonists the tiny over-crowded vessels carried large troops of Indian captives to be sold as slaves in Seville. The misery and discouragement aboard was comparable only to the enthusiasm and the exalted hopes with which the fleet had set out for Asia, the land of gold, fifteen months before. To make matters worse the return voyage lasted over ninety days. Instead of following the northern route which the Fleet of Discovery had taken, the caravels struck due east and suffered either winds continually unfavorable or else stark tropical calms. Provisions ran so low that at one time there was talk of killing the Indian captives that their flesh might serve as food. Others, less ferocious, proposed simply that they be thrown overboard to save as much bread and water as possible. One of the victims of the protracted hardship was Caonabo, Lord of the House of Gold, whom the Admiral was taking home to exhibit to the King and Queen. The captive chief had fallen prey to profound despondency at finding himself in such a humiliating plight, and this may have been the real cause of his death. At any rate, the mighty warrior, whom the whites had admired on their arrival in the New World as the King of Cipango, the land of the roofs of gold, ended by being tossed into the sea like a dead animal!

When the caravels came at last to their moorings in the Port of Cadiz, Columbus found unpopularity stalking forth to meet him. Everyone remembered the glowing promises with which he had set out on his Second

Voyage in search of the Grand Khan: he was going to bring his boats back loaded to the scuppers with gold and spices! What the people at home could see was a line of penniless sailors and ruined colonists, staggering down the gangplanks, yellow with hunger and disease. The gold of the New World had indeed left its terrible reflection upon the faces of these tragic adventurers!

Columbus did his best to stem the tide. In speeches and conversations he strove to rekindle something of the enthusiasm which had welcomed him on his first return. But his hearers would smile, exchange glances, and shake their heads in incredulity. He was not to find again such an audience as had listened to the report of his first expedition at Barcelona. The Grand Khan was now a joke. It was futile to tell of the second sail along the coasts of Cuba to prove that country part of the Asiatic mainland, lying off the Golden Chersonese and the extreme limit of navigation for the ships of Asia. People refused even to believe his story of the Mines of King Solomon discovered on Hispaniola, otherwise the ancient Ophir. Don Cristobal's Delirious Geography had now lost all its splendors and was greeted with scoffing sarcasm on every hand.

Naturally eloquent and possessed of a rare gift for imparting his dreams to others, he would sometimes fascinate his hearers as he had done in the old days. But it was sufficient for any such to have a talk with a colonist returning disillusioned from the New World, and the orations of the Admiral would be reduced to their truer and simpler proportions. The King and Queen were not deserting him. He had received a letter from them at Cadiz inviting him to pay a visit at Court as soon as he



should have rested from his voyage. But public opinion was definitely hostile; worse than that, people were indifferent to his enterprises. They had lost all interest in Asia by the route West. And now as always vehement in his expressions of joy or disappointment, Columbus began to reflect his inner feelings in his personal appearances. He was no longer going about in uniform and with the golden sword of the Admiral of the Ocean Sea with which he had appeared after his First Voyage. He had taken to the habit of a Franciscan friar with its cord knotted about the waist. He was letting his beard grow.

In resorting to these external signs of humility and dejection his thought probably was to disarm the bitterness people were feeling toward him as a result of the complaints of the disillusioned. Finally he withdrew from public view, passing some months in the Monastery at Guadalupe, the most famous of the time, where the friars lived in frequent contact with the King and Queen. There he attended to the conversion of some of his Indian captives and fulfilled various vows which he had made to the Virgin of that shrine. But the unhappy sailor, even when dressed in this garb of poverty to excite public commiseration, could not lose his instincts as a promoter. He could still organize a display to interest and dazzle people. When he set out for Burgos for his audience with the King and Queen he arranged a great procession of all his expedition, Indians and whites alike, and in such a way that the amounts of gold brought home might seem immeasurably increased. At the front of the cortège marched the Indian prisoners arrayed in all their war paint and feathers. The Indian masks they carried, and the fantastic images of animals made of wood or cotton,

were taken by the Spanish inhabitants who lined the roads for images of the Devil. After the slaves came a younger brother of King Caonabo, a man of about thirty; and the dead chief's nephew, a boy at the most of ten. When a village was reached Caonabo's brother would be put in golden chains with a metal collar also of gold and then presented as the lawful "King of Cibao the Golden." The gold in the chain in question had a weight of six hundred "castillians," a quantity equivalent to thirty-two hundred modern dollars. It was the best thing the expedition had to show. As the town was left behind the chain would be removed from the prisoner's body and returned to its place in the Admiral's own baggage.

There was not much emotion in Don Alonso's leave-taking from Don Cristobal. Even that credulous hidalgo had begun to doubt the Admiral's geography and his prophecies as to an early meeting with the Grand Khan. Indeed, he took little interest in that happy prospect. Even if it came true, any honors or riches won would go to the Colons, a cruel, avaricious family capable of depriving those who worked for them of the last crumb of bread. The first of the Discoverers and the first of the Conquistadors bade each other good-bye at Cadiz. They were never to meet again.

The intrepid soldier went straight to Seville to pay his respects to his kinsman, the Archdeacon Fonseca, now a Bishop, who had procured his enrollment in the Second Voyage and was still in charge of all expeditions of exploration to the New World. His Grace Fonseca had had trouble enough in his time with Don Cristobal Colon and listened with interest to all that Ojeda had to say of

conditions in the colony. However, the young captain had no such bitterness against his former chief as the other returned adventurers; he had, besides, only two days to spend in Seville. He was soon off on the road to Cordoba to attend to most important business which demanded his attention in that city.

On landing in Cadiz Don Alonso had made many efforts to have news of Doña Isabel. He had learned nothing. The name of Herboso the lawyer was indeed known to many, since that famous jurisconsult had long been in the service of the King and the Queen. Herboso was still living in Cordoba. People who had seen him recently remarked on his premature old age, caused, they believed, by some mysterious disease. As for his daughter Isabel, it was assumed she had been shut up in some convent; but such a fate, being a frequent destiny among girls of good family, excited curiosity in no one.

Don Alonso arrived in Cordoba, accompanied only by his squire, a wounded soldier whom he had engaged on sailing from Hispaniola; and went to lodge at the Tavern of the Three Wise Men. There, to his sorrow, he learned that Buenosvinos the former proprietor had died the year before. The inn belonged to new people whom he did not know and to them it would be useless to reveal his name. He had thought it wiser to wait till dead of night before revealing his presence to any of his old acquaintances. But evening was coming on, and since no one could possibly be aware of his presence in the city, he thought he could safely take a walk along streets about the convent where Doña Isabel Herboso had been confined, according to reports, for the last two years.

An absurd recourse, worthy of a man in love! What

good could it do him? Isabel was hidden away in a huge building, containing any number of cloisters, and surrounded by a great garden! To be sure, monastic life was at that time much freer than it was to be in later days. It was no unusual thing to see nuns and novices standing at window gratings and talking with their lovers by signs or passing letters up and down on strings. But only by a very wild chance would he find his beautiful lady idling at one of the windows and waiting for him as though some mysterious voice had warned her of his return from the other side of the earth!

Several times Ojeda walked up and down the streets that girt the convent, and in fact, to no purpose. Not only did he fail to see Isabel. There were no nuns at any of the windows, nor was there any trace of the aristocratic gallants usually to be found loitering about the edifice.

Finally he thought of entering the convent church. There he might encounter some talkative sacristan who could give him information about his lady. He might even succeed in getting a message to her! Oh, of course, he was returning from the New World a poor man as compared with the rosy hopes with which he had set sail! Yet he was richer than he had ever been in the days of his adventures under the gratings of lawyer Herboso's mansion. A Genoese merchant in Seville had given him a bag of money in exchange for the gold dust he had gathered on his journeys into the interior of Hispaniola. With a goodly number of castillians jingling at his belt—and he had not yet cashed the nuggets!—he was sure he could find some friend inside those convent walls!

He was crossing the threshold of the church portal

when he stopped suddenly in his tracks and instinctively threw his right hand to the pommel of his sword. A man coming out of the church had almost collided with him! And the man was the lawyer Herboso himself, the bitterest of his enemies! But Don Alonso's astonishment was even greater when he observed the expression on the face of the famous jurist. Herboso recognized him at once though he could not have known of his arrival in Cordoba. But there was no trace of surprise on his features—it was sadness, humility, discouragement. As he looked at the young man, it was through eyes red with weeping; and he seemed to totter for a moment on his feet, as though restraining a sudden impulse to open his arms, clasp Ojeda to him, lay his head on one of the young man's shoulders.

As it was, tender emotions could not linger long in a man of the lawyer's severe and hard-hearted temperament. He straightened up and went on his way, turning upon Ojeda a last glance that was fraternal, comrade-like rather than not, and seemed to linger in the air as a bond of union between them. Two servants were in attendance on the lawyer—an old man and a boy, the latter as solicitous of his master as he would have been of an invalid. As the portal of the church swung open the boy offered the jurist his arm to be sure he did not stumble in crossing the threshold. There was such misery in Herboso's demeanor that Ojeda felt real compassion for him.

Don Alonso entered the church and straightway sought the sacristan. The golden castillian, as he had foreseen, quickly did its work. But the words the sacristan uttered seemed to hurl the young hidalgo back



against one of the pillars of the nave, his two hands raised to his forehead, his knees collapsing under the weight of his body. Yes, lawyer Herboso had been visiting his daughter as he was in the habit of doing every afternoon! Yes, Doña Isabel Herboso was in the convent—or rather, she was in the church! Just one month before she had gone down into one of the cells in the crypt! And there she would remain forever!

Don Alonso de Ojeda was standing in the presence of his loved one again. But she was sleeping beneath his feet, under a marble slab marked with a brief inscription, which his eyes could not decipher from their tears.



PART II  
MINES OF OPHIR



## CHAPTER I

### THE GIBBET

Six years went by before Fernando and Lucero met with Don Alonso de Ojeda again.

This was the most unsettled period of their lives, the most fruitful of changes in domicile and in work, and the least productive of advantage for them. From time to time Don Bartholomew Colon would offer them assistance on being reminded that they had accompanied his brother on the First Voyage of Discovery. But this connection served at the most to enable the sometime deck-hand, Andujar, and his wife, to live a little less miserably than other more recent arrivals on the island. The wealth that daily flitted before Fernando's eyes would never allow itself to be captured by him. He was seeing more and more gold about, but it was not for him. The two young people seemed to have been assigned by destiny to a secondary position in life, where they must always find other more favored ones out-stripping them in riches and distinction.

The Spanish colonists had at last abandoned the unhealthy city of Isabella and the graves of hundreds of their countrymen which filled its churchyard. The town of Santo Domingo was rising on the banks of the Ocema, on lands belonging to the Indian princess who had become the bride of Miguel Diaz. As one of the first arrivals



Cuevas had been assigned a plot of ground near the river bank; and he was building there a house in native style such as he had occupied at Isabella. A number of "tame" Indians, "entrusted" to him, as the phrase went, under a bond which amounted to a slavery thinly veiled, were working in his interest—it was they who constituted his most important prospect for wealth at the moment.

He had also obtained certain strips of land beyond the limits of the town. There he had his gardens for his *casabi* and the other native vegetables that were the staple articles of food on the island. Living was easier, on the whole, than at Isabella. The grains and vegetables imported from Europe grew vigorously in this fertile soil. Horses and cows could be counted by herds in the meadows. The eight sows which Cuevas had seen put aboard ship at the Canaries years before had produced a prolific progeny. Pigs were now running wild about the mountains. A primitive and uncouth prosperity was beginning to render the lives of the colonists endurable.

In the days of famine at Isabella the Spaniards had depended largely for food on the native rabbits called "*utias*," and on the little dogs that never barked. These silent animals were growing exceedingly rare. The very Spaniards who had eaten them with greatest repugnance at first were now hunting them about the island as a kind of rare game. Years later, as an old man, Cuevas was to tell many stories to newcomers on the island about this animal which had completely disappeared. By that time beef, pork, turkey, chicken, tastily fattened on the rich farmlands, had become very humdrum delicacies. It took the memory of "dogs that never barked" to rouse the wealthy Spaniard of those later days to real appetite.

“That was the game for you! What a pity they have all been killed!” The native dog roasted on a spit over an open fire in the wilderness had already passed into legend as a feature of the heroic age of the colony.

Fernando was now absent for long periods of time from his new home in Santo Domingo. He was working in the mines. Bartholomew Colon, the Acting Governor, needed to have there men whom he could trust to prevent robberies on the part of the whites, and idleness on the part of the native workers. Engineers with experience in mining had come on from Spain, and the Indians were now being held to regular hours of labor. Cuevas spent much time as an overseer in the so-called Mines of King Solomon, recording the amounts of metal extracted from the ground, guarding the bullion in the bohio where he lived, and finally transporting it to the Royal Treasury established at Santo Domingo. Later on, when the great mines in Mexico and Peru were opened, he came to understand what a paltry thing the output of gold on Hispaniola had been. But in these first days the Mines of King Solomon were the first tangible wealth that had been encountered in the territories of the Grand Khan; and they seemed to justify the Biblical name of Ophir which the Admiral had bestowed on the island.

The prodigious vitality of that soil, which passed so easily into plants and animals, seemed likewise to have hastened the growth of Fernando and his family. Cuevas was now a tall, sturdy, muscular man. A thick beard reaching far down on his chest, was giving to his still youthful years the impressive dignity, the overawing prestige of a man inured to all kinds of adventures. Lucero, too, had grown hardy and strong. She still kept

her slenderness of figure but under the soft texture of her skin one sensed the presence of a robust frame clothed in hard elastic muscles that were ready to function with agility and power. Fernando could hardly recognize in her that timid and delicate girl who had fled with him from Andujar to join Columbus's First Voyage. Surviving the pestilences of the early days of colonization, she had availed herself of all the adaptabilities of her race and became in a few years a sturdy Amazon, worthy helpmeet to a Conquistador. Sometimes she would dress in male attire to accompany her husband, as just one soldier more, on his explorations into the interior. In the mines she dressed like Fernando and did most of the things he did at his work. She would remember her sex only on returning to her bohio and her garden at Santo Domingo and finding her female garments in the closets and chests of her home; just as she would remember that she was a mother only when little Alonso, now a young man indeed, would be up to some deviltry as chief of a tribe of Indian boys, who obeyed him in everything by virtue of his superior race.

If wealth never seemed to halt at their door, Fernando and Lucero were happy and they were comfortable; though the peaceful course of their lives was often disturbed by the rivalries which kept springing up among the colonists. Cuevas tried to hold aloof from the quarreling factions, but that did not preserve him or his family from many of the consequences of civil war.

Don Cristobal had set out from Spain on a Third Voyage and, on reaching Antillian waters, had diverted a part of his fleet to Hispaniola, while he himself went on with his other vessels to reach the mainland of the

Grand Khan's empire and discover the famous Straits of the Golden Chersonese. A rebellion against Don Bartholomew was in progress at Santo Domingo. One of the Admiral's men, a certain Roldan, an ignorant but energetic individual with more aptitudes for leadership than most of the colonists, had risen against the Acting Governor and placed him, on several occasions, in dangerous situations. At the same time Don Bartholomew had had to deal with chiefs of the interior again gone on the war-path, though these were finally subdued.

The Admiral reached the island in the month of August of the year 1498. The two brothers had not seen each other for two years and a half. Cuevas and his wife thought they could detect the ravages of age and disease in Don Cristobal's physique. During the First Voyage Lucero had often heard her master, as she said, "talking with God." On this Third Voyage the Admiral had had frequent visions wherein celestial beings, or even the Deity Himself, appeared before him in his cabin aft to give him counsel or encouragement at moments of danger.

He had sailed for many miles along the coast of Asia, reaching finally a so-called Gulf of Paria where pearls were abundant. Indeed one of the islands near by he baptized as "Margarita." He had brought several pounds of the gems to Santo Domingo. Nowhere had he found certain trace of the proximity of the Grand Khan; but he could console himself for that failure by reporting the exact location of the Earthly Paradise, and the discovery that the earth "is not spherical as many believe, but rather of the shape of a pear, or of a woman's breast," the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve dwelt resting

on the apex of the pear, or in the other figure, on the tip of the nipple.

Off the Gulf of Paria he encountered violent currents in the sea which induced him to believe that the water was running down hill and that he had to climb up hill against it—another proof that the earth was not spherical but tapered off in a long high point!

On the north shore of the mainland the Ocean proved to be fresh over a distance of many miles, because the current of the Orinoco was powerful enough to reach for considerable distances into the sea. In this stream Columbus recognized one of the four rivers that “come down from the Earthly Paradise to water the whole Earth.” The feeling that he was near the mountain which bore the Eden of our first ancestors on its flattened summit gave new strength to a conviction that he was coasting the shores of Asia. Had not all writers located the Earthly Paradise in that part of the world? Finally scarcity of provisions and leaks in his boats obliged him to turn back to Hispaniola, satisfied with the discoveries he had made and keen to write a description of them for the King and Queen.

The Admiral was eager to become acquainted with his new city at Santo Domingo. His presence served to heal the breach between the Acting Governor and Roldan, the latter again becoming a partisan of the Colons after having been the leader of these colonists—and they were the majority—who were dissatisfied with the Admiral’s administration.

Some months later Fernando Cuevas learned to his own great satisfaction as well as to the relief of many of his friends, that Don Alonso de Ojeda, in command of



a fleet of four vessels, had anchored off the west coast of the island. Cut off by huge distances from the rest of the world the colonists heard of events in Spain only after long delays. The Sovereigns had seen the absurdity of reserving to one man, Columbus, absolute monopoly of voyages of discovery to the New World. Many Spanish sailors, inferior to the Admiral in imagination but with a more practical sense of realities, had been soliciting royal permission to lead expeditions at their own expense. No one believed any longer in the Grand Khan, nor that the new lands were a part of Asia; Columbus was the only man of prominence still clinging to the fantastic geography with which he had set out on his First Voyage. The man who had led the way eight years before was now the most out-of-date, the most stubbornly backward, in persisting in exploded errors. The Admiral, furthermore, had always made his voyages at royal expense. These new applicants asked for licenses and not for money—a very important distinction in the eyes of the Sovereigns; and they, partly in a spirit of economy, and partly with the idea of satisfying as many people as possible, finally decided to proclaim the freedom of the Ocean for all their subjects who desired to set out in search of new lands. The selfish and absurd privileges claimed by the Colons were a thing of the past.

The first to avail himself of this new dispensation had been Alonso de Ojeda, who had taken his friend Juan de la Cosa as chief pilot, and as his expert in navigation that Florentine clerk in the stores of Giannotto Berradi of Seville, known to everyone as Américo Vespuccio, the Spanish form of his real name, Amerigo Vespucci. The four vessels had stopped at Hispaniola to cut a cargo

of mahogany, the only commercial prospect still in sight for them.

On landing on the island the crews of Don Alonso established connections with the few colonists on that distant shore and all they had to say was soon a matter of common knowledge at Santo Domingo. Their voyage had been exciting but so far without profit. They had fought many battles on the islands inhabited by the Caribs and on the very shores of the mainland off which Don Cristobal himself had appeared some weeks after them. Cuevas could only smile at such reports. Any expedition that Don Alonso commanded would be sure to see plenty of fighting!

Don Alonso's fleet had also crossed the sea of fresh water at the mouths of the Orinoco; but neither Juan de la Cosa nor his pupil, Vespucci, had the slightest idea that that great river flowed out from Paradise. At one point on the voyage, which had followed the mainland westward, Don Alonso entered a land-locked gulf, a sort of inland sea, in which he found villages with canals for streets and groups of buildings erected on piles. This had reminded Don Alonso of Venice, and he had decided to call the country "Little Venice," "Venezuela," a name which was to become generally used and finally applied to a nation.

Don Cristobal was alarmed on learning of the arrival of this new adventurer at his island. He was well aware of the courage of his sometime captain-at-arms and of the change in Ojeda's sentiments toward him personally. The malcontents of the island, who had been betrayed by Roldan, took courage on learning of Don Alonso's presence. In him they saw a future leader. Ojeda, for his

part, in talking with the few white men he met along the coasts, expressed himself in vehement terms against Don Cristobal. He reported the greater and greater discredit into which the Admiral was falling in Spain, and showed himself disposed to support with his own men any enterprise which had as its purpose the expulsion of the three Colons from Hispaniola.

Roldan assembled all the fighting men he could and hurried to Ojeda's anchorage to prevent landing. For some weeks negotiations went back and forth between the two captains, the one trying assiduously to outwit the other. But Ojeda's provisions were running low and his ships were in bad condition. He finally lifted anchor and set sail for Spain.

After Don Alonso's departure Cuevas again saw the affairs of the island thrown into confusion. The peace which the Admiral had attained by coming to an understanding with Roldan was to go to pieces in a mere love affair.

For some time now Queen Gold Flower had been living in Jaragua at the "court" of her brother Behechio. Meantime the daughter she had had from her late husband, Caonabo, was in the full florescence of early womanhood, which seemed to develop among the natives of the New World at ages when women in Europe would still be girls. As much admired for her physical beauty as her mother had been, she had the same inclinations for music, poetry, "fashion," never appearing in public unless bedecked with crowns and circlets of flowers.

Now there chanced to be with the colony at Santo Domingo a young hidalgo of illustrious family, Don Hernando de Guevara by name, a hail-fellow well-met,

and of distinguished manners, though scandals arising from his loose ways with women and from the armed quarrels he was continually provoking had finally caused the Admiral to banish him from the colony.

Don Hernando betook himself to Jaragua with the intention of joining the fleet of Don Alonso de Ojeda. He reached the western coast, however, sometime after Ojeda had departed, so he settled in Jaragua within the domains of Queen Anacaona, who treated him with great distinction as was her habit toward all the whites. Guevara and Gold Flower's daughter fell in love forthwith and the Spanish hidalgo announced his intentions of marrying the Indian princess. Roldan, meantime, had cast his eyes on the young woman and conceived a mad passion for her. He began to annoy Guevara, ordering him, among other things, to leave that part of the island immediately.

Don Hernando was cousin to a young Spaniard, Andrian de Mujica, one of Roldan's most vigorous subordinates. Mujica sided with his kinsman and bitter hatred arose between him and his former comrade-in-arms, Roldan. Taking the offensive Roldan raided the "palace" of Anacaona and carried off Guevara's hunting dogs and the hawks which he had trained; and later, catching the young hidalgo on a visit to the princess, he placed him under arrest. Mujica thereupon arose in mutiny and he was joined by all of the many personal enemies of the Admiral's lieutenant.

Rebellion was once more rife in the colony, this time against Roldan. But that wily captain was a master hand at conspiracy and intrigue. He won the Admiral and Don Bartholomew to his side and suffocated the

revolt before it was well under way, the Colons joining in with enthusiasm with a view to settling many private scores at this favorable opportunity. Mujica and his leading supporters were captured by surprise and led in chains to Fort Concepción. Thinking to cure the habit of rebellion once and for all, the Admiral ordered Mujica to be confessed by a priest and hanged at once from the flagstaff of the fort. On being led out to execution Mujica tried to delay the fatal moment by protracting his confession. Finally the Admiral grew impatient and ordered him thrown to his death from the walls.

Don Bartholomew was even more blood-thirsty in his policies of repression. He went about the island taking a priest along in his company to save time. The Spaniards he captured were confessed at once and hanged from the nearest tree. Other prisoners were sent to the fortress of Santo Domingo, till seventeen miserable human beings had been assembled in a sort of well underground to be kept for a first-class hanging festival.

Cuevas stood apart from these struggles, convinced in his inner thought that, as often happens in quarrels among human beings, both sides were partly right, both partly wrong.

However the Colons were not gaining any affection by these barbarities. Imperious, arrogant, deficient in all those qualities that inspire respect for commanders, with no generosity toward anyone, and of a greediness for riches which they were at no pains to disguise, they had alienated the sympathies of virtually everyone in the colony. Many of the rebels were brutal, violent men of whom, doubtless, the island was well rid; but the Colons made matters worse by driving their enemies to despera-



tion, refusing them rations to which they were entitled, since the provisions which the Sovereigns kept sending from Spain belonged to the colonists at large without individual exception whatsoever. For two years now the Admiral and his brother had been hoarding the gold that had accumulated at the mines without paying out to the colonists the amounts due for labor. In addition to all this Columbus and his brother were not Spaniards, strictly speaking. No one on the island was quite sure whence they came.

Roldan and the two Colons were busy hanging their enemies, and their foes still at large were taking to the hills to escape similar fate, when one morning, while on a visit to Santo Domingo, Cuevas saw two caravels drop anchor at the mouth of the Ocema. They hailed from Spain. One of them bore a Royal Commissioner, Don Francisco de Bobadilla, chief of a leading military order and an important officer in the royal household.

Hatred of the Colons in Spain had attained such proportions that the King and Queen thought themselves obliged to despatch a representative to Hispaniola with full power to investigate the things that were occurring and to apply such remedies as seemed required in order to check abuses. Every vessel returning from the New World came with sick and desperate refugees, all "yellow as gold," as people said in ironical jest at their jaundiced prostration. And all of these unfortunates and their families cried aloud against the arbitrary violences committed by Columbus and his brother as measures rather befitting a despotic régime at sea than a colony of laborious citizens. Even the best friends of the Admiral were admitting that, excellent sea captain as he

might have been, he was quite out of place off a quarter-deck, that as a governor of people ashore his equal for incompetence and short-sightedness would have been hard to find. People also pointed out that he was a foreigner anyway, and likely therefore to proclaim himself an independent sovereign, or even to sell to some other power lands which Spain was buying at the price of so much money and blood.

One day on issuing from the Palace at Granada the King and Queen were beset by a multitude of destitute and suffering human beings lately returned from the New World, who came pleading for punishment of the Admiral. Don Cristobal's two sons, Diego and Fernando, happened to be present as pages of the royal consorts. The two boys had to hide before the cries and curses which the mob of protestants hurled in their directions, denouncing them as "the two young mosquitoes," offspring of the man who had sucked human blood like an insatiable insect—cried the refugees in picturesque expression of their despair!

Bobadilla came, therefore, already prejudiced against the Colons; and the moment of his arrival could not have been better calculated to confirm his bad impressions. To the left and right of the port as he entered the Royal Commissioner could see a gibbet each bearing the body of a Spaniard who had been hanged that morning. Seven others had suffered a like penalty during the week preceding, and the famous dungeon in the fortress was crowded with still more, waiting for the Admiral or the Acting Governor to fix the hour of their death.

The appearance of the two caravels gave heart to all the enemies of the administration, and they straightway

became aggressive. Many partisans of the Admiral hastened to proclaim that they had always been against him in reality. Others, unwilling to stoop to such cowardice, made ready to escape inland. Don Cristobal was absent at the moment, trying to restore order in the Vega Real after the execution of Mujica. Don Bartholomew was running the country westward with Roldan, hanging Spaniards suspected of sedition as fast as they could be captured. To cap the climax Don Cristobal had left his half-witted brother, Don Diego, in command at the capital.

With characteristic stupidity this little cleric refused to recognize Bobadilla, questioning the authenticity of the credentials he presented from the Sovereigns. When Bobadilla persisted in landing in spite of that, Diego even tried to offer armed resistance by secretly assembling the partisans of the Colons for an attack upon the Commissioner's party. Cuevas had knowledge of this effort because the Colons always regarded him as one of their men. The movement failed, however, because no one dared face the turn in public opinion which had been caused by Bobadilla's appearance. Miguel Diaz, the adventurer who had discovered the mines and married "Queen" Catalina, was in command at the fortress and did indeed refuse to hand it over; but none of his soldiers would obey his orders to fire, and the Commissioner marched in at the head of the population of the town to set at liberty the prisoners who were lying in the dungeon.

As had been the case on the arrival of Juan Aguado six years before, Columbus was inclined to delay his return to face the music. This gave his enemies time to

assert that he was arming the Indians with a view to expelling Bobadilla from the island and declaring his independence of the King and Queen of Spain. And the longer the Colons delayed in offering their submission, the angrier Bobadilla grew, resorting to measures more and more extreme. The half-witted Don Diego, who had adopted a haughty tone toward the Commissioner, at once found himself in prison with irons on his hands and feet—such was the procedure in those days toward anyone falling into the hands of the law. The first act of a judge in dealing with an individual charged with a crime was to order chains upon his wrists and ankles. In Spain itself people who were sent to prison, even on petty charges and for a few days, were immediately placed in irons. However, during the two years of Bobadilla's residence in Santo Domingo Cuevas had plenty of opportunity to sound the character of the man. Given indeed to harshness and to measures of impulsive severity, he was a person of unquestionable honor and uprightness, quite unattached to money and incapable of placing duty second to any prompting of interest. A high sense of personal pride made him firm in his decisions and intolerant of any disposition to question the authority vested in him.

When at last Columbus came into Santo Domingo, Bobadilla placed him under arrest and sent him aboard one of the caravels in irons. A few days later Don Bartholomew appeared and he was hurried also in chains aboard the second caravel. Far from protesting at this vigorous action the colonists loudly applauded the new governor. There were some, to be sure, who had passed long periods aboard ship under the Admiral's command

and who were accustomed to revere and love him. Such looked on compassionately, but for the most part in silence. On the other hand, one man who had been the Admiral's personal cook asked and obtained permission to rivet the manacles to his ankles.

When the ships set sail for Spain the colonists gathered at the mouth of the harbor to revile and curse the Admiral and to express the hope that they would never see him again. But once at sea Columbus found himself treated with greater respect. Andrés Martin, the captain of his vessel, came in person to remove his irons. Columbus however was resolved to see the thing through to the end and insisted on keeping them as physical evidence of the ingratitude that was being shown him. Cuevas was later to learn that in spite of this attitude the Admiral appeared before the Queen on arriving in Spain rather as a penitent craving pardon than as an individual conscious of his right and regarding himself as the victim of injustice—for that matter, many of the accusations against him were biased and exaggerated. But in the end he could not explain away his barbarities as governor, his misuse of rations to enforce discipline, and especially his delays in paying over to the workers in the mines the money due them from the earnings in gold. The King and Queen nevertheless gave public evidence of their forgiveness, remarking that they "preferred to see him rather amended than chastised"; and to restore his prestige and give him ample demonstration of confidence, they fitted out at their own expense the Fourth Expedition which would permit him to discover the realms of the Grand Khan. The Admiral was more certain than ever that he could shortly find the



Straits that led past the Golden Chersonese to the mouths of the Ganges.

The period of Bobadilla's governorship was not on the whole a pleasant one for Cuevas to remember. Now without the support of the Colons, if such a term might be used of the occasional memory the Admiral and Don Bartholomew sometimes had of him, he was not allowed to work in the Mines of King Solomon. At the same time he had held his tongue during all the quarrels in the colony and was able to escape the persecutions suffered by more active partisans of the Admiral. He kept to his farm near Santo Domingo working his lands and living on their earnings. He was certain that the Colons would never again be seen on Hispaniola.

But his thoughts turned frequently to his old protector and amiable friend, Don Alonso de Ojeda, the man he had most admired among his many superiors. He hoped at times that some day Don Alonso would come sailing into the harbor; but then again he would conclude that it was more probable the doughty hidalgo would never return. Reports were now frequently coming in of other discoveries to the westward made by new adventurers. Who could say? Ojeda might be out there in those new lands amassing at last the fabulous wealth of which he and Cuevas had talked so often together! And what a disgrace for him, Cuevas! He had always dreamed of winning wealth and glory in Asia as a heroic man-at-arms! Here he was working like a peasant on the outskirts of a poor village on an island of Indian savages!

Bobadilla, however, had been ruling the island provisionally, as Commissioner and Investigator. In time



he was replaced by a permanent governor, Don Nicolas de Ovando, a gentleman of importance at Court, who appeared off Santo Domingo with the greatest fleet that so far had ever been seen in waters of the New World. His thirty vessels carried fifteen hundred colonists, many of these scions of noble families emigrating with their wives and children. For the first time women were disembarking in the colony with their marriage certificates in order. The little city, virtually a garrison hitherto, was at last beginning to live as a community of civilians.

Like Bobadilla and many Spaniards of the time, Ovando was a gentleman with unusually high ideals of personal integrity. But he was haughty in bearing, and headstrong in his policies. Disposed to treat the whites under his command with chivalrous generosity, he regarded the native as a kind of animal outside the law of man and God. It was a harsh and cruel rule the Spaniards now forced upon the Indians—and the latter were still a spirited people capable of offering resistance when driven to despair. Ovando dealt with them in a Machiavellian fashion not infrequent in his Europe. Sensing the mood of rebellion prevalent in the island, he invited the principal native chiefs to an entertainment at a village in the country. Then when he had them all assembled in one place, he put them to death. Poor Queen Gold Flower! She too was accused of plotting the general uprising, brought to Santo Domingo in chains, and finally condemned, at Ovando's direction, to be hanged.

The inhabitants of the city gathered in a great throng to witness Flor de Oro's end. Fernando Cuevas was one of the few who had actually seen the famous queen. The

majority of the colonists now were newcomers who knew of Anacaona's beauty and of the heroism of her late Carib husband only from a fading tradition. An execution in those days was a sort of public festival even in the most civilized countries. Lucero herself was eager to attend the spectacle. She had often heard her husband tell the story of his visit to Queen Gold Flower's "capital," though he had never boasted of the great self control he had exercised on that occasion in the presence of the Indian beauty's charms. Fernando, for his part, joined the morbid crowds with a grip at his heart.

Down the road from the fortress came the Indian sovereign, her hands manacled behind her back, much as her husband in his day had entered Isabella, a prisoner of Don Alonso. But this time there were no flowers on her head, no wreathlets about her arms and ankles. She was naked save for a cotton apron tied about her loins. In spite of her forty years she still looked a girl, as though her youth were a springtime perpetually renewed and like the gardens of her tropical wilderness knew no winter and no dry leaves. She went to her death without the stoical indifference shown by most victims of her race, but nevertheless without fear. She walked rapidly, firmly, not caring, it would have seemed, to quibble over a few extra moments of life. But it was not bravado. There was sadness rather in the expression on her face. Her soft doe-like eyes were bright with tears.

Born a savage in a primitive world, Queen Gold Flower had had an instinctive love for the beautiful things of life. The coming of the Sons of Heaven had been a revelation to her. How she had admired them always! And now they were strangling her! Doubtless

there in front of the gibbet her thoughts turned to the young centaur who had come before her clothed in light, his mighty torso glittering with the radiance of the sun upon her rivers or of the moon upon her lakes. Had her Little White Chief been near he would not have allowed them to put her to death!

Anacaona never could have dreamed that at that very moment her hero as luminous as a star was standing a spectator in the very throng that was looking upon her agony! But now how changed in aspect! A man prematurely aged through bitterness and sorrow, and with none of his sometime splendor as the Little White Chief!

But shortly, Cuevas could see her up there above the heads of the crowd, her mouth agape, her lower jaw jammed against her breast, her long, gorgeous hair thrown forward over her face, her body gently swaying at the end of a rope which held her to a wooden beam braced across a vertical post!

Poor Queen Gold Flower!

## CHAPTER II

### THE GOLD OF KING SOLOMON

Toward the close of the Year of Our Lord, 1500, Bobadilla being still regent in Santo Domingo, Cuevas and Lucero received an unexpected visit in their house near the town. It was from Señor Juan de la Cosa! The famous pilot of the Fleet of Discovery looked like a man just issued from great privations; and at his first words Fernando thought of a report which had been circulating for some days past about the city square. Three parties of adventurers were advancing across the island of Hispaniola trafficking with the natives without authority from the Governor, each of them, so it was said, carrying a chest full of gold and pearls. The captain of the ill-fated *Santa Maria* was, in fact, in command of one of those parties, all three made up of shipwrecked sailors who had lost their vessels on the North Coast and were, so to speak, peddling their way toward the fortress in the South.

In the years that had passed Juan de la Cosa had gone as chief pilot to Don Alonso de Ojeda, with Amerigo Vespucci as his assistant in navigation. Later on he had listened to a proposal from one Rodrigo de Bastidas, a scrivener of the Triana district in Seville who had succumbed to the lure of tales from the New World and decided to turn a trick at discovery himself.

The scrivener of Triana was not the placid well-fed person comfortably advanced in years his profession might have suggested. He was a man in the full flush of youth; and back there in his neighborhood in Seville he was known as a roisterer with a gift for music and a bravo well trained in the arts of self defense. The shrewdness, diplomacy, and sharpness of wit which stood him in such good stead in his legal practice he adapted very well to his career as an explorer. His first step, in fact, was a wise one: to seek counsel of the ocean-going pilots then in highest repute, among them of Señor Juan de la Cosa, lately returned from the unsuccessful voyage of Alonso de Ojeda to settle near Cadiz at the port of Santa Maria, where he was busy making and selling charts of the New World.

Astonishing good luck attended the stout-hearted scrivener in his new calling. His voyage was the first to produce any real money. Coasting along the mainland from the Cabo de la Vela, Ojeda's easternmost mark, westward to the haven at Nombre de Dios (Panamá), Bastidas bartered profitably with the natives, collecting gold and pearls in considerable quantities. The scrivener differed from Columbus and other early explorers in his perfect manners, his good-natured accommodating disposition, his tactfulness in dealings with the Indians. This expedition, indeed, captained by a sensible, scientifically minded man of the stamp of Juan de la Cosa, and financed by a merchant trained to all the graces of the Andalusian Exchanges and experienced in the subtle adjustments of interest familiar to a lawyer, was really the first truly commercial enterprise directed toward the New World. Bastidas and his men filled three

chests with gold and pearls and were looking forward to further earnings which would make them the richest men on the western side of the Ocean, when their prosperity was checked by a most unexpected blow. Their vessels suddenly became so many sieves from the ravages of the terrible shipworm—a destroyer common enough in tropical waters but with which the Spanish mariners had as yet not learned how to cope. By superhuman seamanship Juan de la Cosa managed to bring his vessels from the mainland to Hispaniola. There the bottoms dropped out of them. Bastidas and his men managed to get ashore, however, with the valuable portions of their cargoes.

Since the country offered no prospect of supporting such a large company of foragers, the crews broke up into three groups to make their way by different routes to the new Port of Santo Domingo. Bastidas arrived there a day sooner than his captain, and explained to Bobadilla the necessity of trading with the natives in order to procure provisions and guides. The excuse, however, did not avail. A charge of trespass and illegal traffic was brought against him, and the three coffers of valuables were seized. The members of the expedition were to be held at Santo Domingo for a year and a half waiting to be sent to Spain with their treasure to defend their cause in the courts of the realm.

De la Cosa knew almost no one in the present population of the colony and he had gone straightway to the young couple whose house he had frequented in the now abandoned town of Isabella. Cuevas and his wife had ample time to hear the whole story of Don Alonso's adventures.

Of Ojeda's voyage the Captain had, on the whole,



most unpleasant memories. It was the least profitable of any he had undertaken in his adventurous career. They had discovered "Little Venice," or Venezuela, and other regions to the Northeast following the so-called mainland. But they were always at war with the savages. Wherever Don Alonso set foot blood was sure to flow! Ojeda was so eager for trouble that whenever natives came aboard to visit him he would fire a broadside to show them what he could do. Thereupon every last Indian, male and female alike, would jump headlong into the sea—"like so many frogs ducking in a pond at the splash of a stone," Vespucci later wrote.

A number of merchants in Seville had bought and equipped the four vessels, imagining the fiery hidalgo would return with a rich haul. But after sailing thousands of miles Don Alonso had nothing to show for his trouble except a few gold masks such as Columbus had brought back from the Voyage of Discovery. Losing hope at last and with the idea of showing something of value to his outfitters, Don Alonso anchored off the west coast of Hispaniola to cut a cargo of redwood. But Roldan, the Admiral's lieutenant, had thereupon appeared and prevented the execution of that project. Finally the captain was reduced to scouting about among the neighboring islands for Caribs to sell in Seville as slaves. Notwithstanding this cruel recourse, which was then regarded as legitimate, profits from the expedition proved to be small. With expenses paid barely five hundred ducats remained to be divided among fifty men. The fiasco looked worse than it was in fact; Pero Alonso Niño, the captain who had sailed the First and Third Voyages with the Admiral, had made a flying

trip across the ocean with another man named Cristobal Guerra and returned to Spain two months earlier than Ojeda with a fine assortment of pearls.

What had become of Don Alonso meantime? The venerable sea-dog did not know. He had last seen the hidalgo in Seville discussing another expedition with some business men of that city. But they were going along themselves. They were willing to utilize Ojeda's courage and experience but they chose to manage the commercial end of the enterprise in person. Juan de la Cosa had not been well impressed with his friend's associates, accepting in preference the offer of the scrivener, Bastidas, a man much easier to work with since he never interfered in matters of navigation about which he knew and pretended to know nothing.

One detail of the Captain's story was of great interest to Cuevas and Lucero, though Juan de la Cosa mentioned it in the most matter-of-fact manner in the world. Don Alonso was now living with an Indian squaw he had picked up in Venezuela.

It was on a visit to one of the villages on the lagoons which had inclined the Spaniards to call the country "Little Venice." The women of the region were tall, slender creatures, much lighter in complexion than the females of the other tribes. Some of them had come aboard and remained with the white men of their own choice. One in particular became attached to the chief of the expedition. Ojeda had taken her as a concubine and treated her as the Spaniards usually treated these casual wives. He ended by carrying her back to Spain, manifesting no great interest in her however. But in Spain his attitude seemed to change—in gratitude, perhaps,

for her blind dog-like obedience and fidelity. He had had her baptized in Seville under the name of Isabel.

Cuevas and Lucero exchanged glances. Isabel? Doña Isabel Herboso! Of her death they had likewise learned through Juan de la Cosa. During the passing years Don Alonso had not forgotten that great sadness in his life!

"In the old days," de la Cosa resumed, "when the Admiral used to be talking of the Empire of the Grand Khan," (and here the Captain smiled ironically), "Ojeda was always thinking of the kingdom he might conquer or of the treasure he might amass. But he seemed to forget all that when Isabelita died. I have a feeling that since then he has been coming over here just for amusement, just to get his troubles off his mind. He seems to enjoy being commander of a fleet and wants everybody to obey him. But when the time comes to divide earnings, he gives his own share to his comrades. He will pick a quarrel on almost any subject, but never about money. He still carries his little picture of the Virgin everywhere he goes. But he says the Virgin only saves his life! Doña Isabel was the one who brought him luck in money! Now that she is gone, he is beginning to think he will always be poor. I imagine what he really means is that with his lady love dead, money for him is just something in the way, rubbish to be tossed at random to his sailors!"

When Bobadilla transferred the capital of the island to Ovando and was ready for the voyage home, Bastidas and Juan de la Cosa were taken aboard a ship under virtual arrest to answer in Spain for the charges lodged against them. The Commissioner's fleet was just sailing

when a sudden tempest destroyed the greater part of it in the very Port of Santo Domingo.

Columbus had arrived off the harbor the day before with a fleet of four vessels on his Fourth (and last) Voyage. In order to avoid new trouble the Sovereigns had directed him not to touch at Santo Domingo since the colonists there were still hostile to him. But the Admiral had an account to settle, and was determined, in the childish spirit of a man in his dotage, to settle it. He had to show himself in command of a new fleet outfitted by the King and Queen in the harbor whence he had departed two years before with shackles on his ankles! On pretext of damages suffered in the voyage out, he boldly entered the Mouth of the Ocema. Though newly installed as Governor, Ovando understood the provocative intent of the visit, and was aware of the hatred that the colonists still felt for the Admiral. He sternly forbade him to enter the basin. But Don Cristobal was more expert in the signs of the tropical ocean than most of Bobadilla's captains who were making their first voyage to the New World. He warned Ovando that appearances indicated the approach of one of those hurricanes that struck the island from time to time, and hurried, himself, to a safe lee. His advice was not heeded, however, by Bobadilla and Ovando.

The storm broke a few hours later. Every one of Don Cristobal's vessels weathered the tempest. So even did a few vessels of the fleet managed by captains who had had experience with such winds. Juan de la Cosa came to the rescue of the caravel on which he was booked as a passenger and brought that vessel safely through with Bastidas and the three chests of treasure. Bobadilla's

boat went down at the first impact with all on board ; and with the Royal Commissioner sank the papers in the prosecution against Columbus, and all the affidavits detailing the crimes which had occasioned his return home in chains.

Among other losses was the biggest gold nugget hitherto found in the New World, being "the size of a Castillian loaf and many pounds in weight." The nugget had been escorted aboard the fleet with great pomp by the Spaniards employed in the Mines of King Solomon. The colonists were already beginning to feel a certain pride in their island as something peculiarly their own. They rejoiced in the wealth it produced, even if most of the profits were destined to others. A farewell banquet was served in honor of the chunk of gold before it left the mines to be delivered to the Governor—a hog roasted whole, and the pork served on plates of gold to all employed in the mines. These Spaniards inland were retrograding almost without knowing it, towards a primitive half-savage life. There they were, dressed in plain cotton shirts and trousers, distinguishable from the Indians about them only by their swords and their shields. Yet they were impelled, as if by instinct, to embellish this uncouth pioneer existence with absurdly ostentatious luxuries. The portions of gold that came to them in remuneration for labor they were hammering into plates, goblets, household utensils. Hardly a home in Santo Domingo but had tableware that would have seemed more fitting in some magnate's palace in Europe. From these regal vessels they would eat and drink, tossing their leavings to the Indian peons who sat huddled at their feet like so many domestic animals.



In September of the year 1502, Cuevas and Lucero were to experience a surprise even greater than the unexpected visit of Juan de la Cosa. An old friend of the days of Isabella informed Fernando that his former commander, Don Alonso de Ojeda, had been in Santo Domingo for more than twenty-four hours, but unfortunately in prison.

Fernando hurried into town followed by an Indian with a basket full of the most toothsome delicacies Lucero had been able to scramble together. He found the hidalgo locked up in the stone building that served as gaol, though the guards about him acted as though they were his servants rather than his jailers, so great the awe in which everyone stood of this mighty warrior so famous in Island legend. Short of stature, muscular in arm, still light on his feet with that elasticity of movement which suggested great reserves of compressed, exuberant energy, Don Alonso was, on the whole, the man he had always been. Now turned thirty, he had every bit of the recklessness of spirit and the deftness of foot and hand that had distinguished his heroic boyhood.

He was on his way home from his second voyage of discovery, having first been robbed and then imprisoned by his partners in adventure. Within a few hours, however, the Governor's court had given him his liberty under bond, and Cuevas was enabled to learn the details of this new enterprise which had been even less profitable than the first one.

Again the influence of Bishop Fonseca had stood Ojeda in good stead. Stories of his courageous deeds had made him popular about the Spanish harbors, especially in Seville, to which latter port all men of adventuresome



spirit were drifting in hopes of a chance to get off to the New World. In consideration of his past services, and such as he might in future render, the Sovereigns had made him a grant of six square leagues of land in southern Hispaniola. He had furthermore been named "Governor of the Province of Coquibaboa," in territory on the mainland reconnoitered during his first voyage, with authorization to conquer it with a fleet not exceeding ten vessels to be equipped at his own expense. Short of capital, however, and wary of the usurers who had exploited him on his first expedition, he turned this time to private investors. He succeeded in interesting two of them, the one a certain Vergara, steward of a wealthy cleric in Seville, the other a man named Ocambo. As the event proved, these non-professionals were able to deliver at the last moment only money enough to outfit four caravels instead of ten. But the enterprise had attracted the bravest and most turbulent elements then present in Seville, especially many who had participated in earlier clandestine voyages across the Ocean.

An expedition manned by rough and ready individuals accustomed to maltreating the Indians, and financed by speculators of moderate resources eager to make money by any means required, could at best result only in acts of violence and robbery wherever it touched shore, and in disorder and mutiny on shipboard. On landing at Cumaná, Ojeda's men plundering such native villages as they encountered and, in contravention of Ojeda's orders, killed numerous Indians and took others aboard as slaves. Vergara and Ocambo, in particular, looked the women over, set the old ones and the ugly ones free, and then held the younger and prettier for ransom from

their native husbands. Out of all this business of blood and outrage Ojeda kept for himself one plain cotton hammock!

Having collected small amounts of gold, the fleet proceeded. At a place called Citarme, they came upon a Spaniard who had deserted from the expedition of Bastidas three months before. He had taken up life among the Indians, and succeeded in mastering their language. Ojeda started building a fort and a town at this point; but the natives were hostile. There was constant fighting, and great shortage of provisions, and the poor prospects of any profits ahead were causing restlessness and disobedience among the crews. All the gold collected during the various landings was kept in a box in Ojeda's "residence" ashore under a lock of which Ojeda held the keys. In the end this situation angered his partners. As he lay asleep one night, Vergara and Ocambo entered his bedroom at the head of the mutineers, placed him in chains, and took him aboard one of the vessels to lock him up. Such Don Alonso's departure from the "province" of which he was "Royal Governor" and from "Holy Cross," the first town he had founded on the newly discovered continent!

His two partners came with the chest in dispute aboard the caravel where Don Alonso lay a prisoner. The vessel was in no condition to return to Spain. They decided accordingly to land at Santo Domingo and prosecute Ojeda before the authorities there.

The caravel came to anchor a short distance off the west coast of Hispaniola. During the night Ojeda succeeded in freeing his hands from his chains, hopped to the side of the vessel, and trusting to his strength and

resourcefulness, plunged into the sea with the idea of swimming ashore. However, his ankles were still in irons and he could not use his legs. The weight of the shackles and of the heavy chain that went with them proved more than he could manage. In a few moments he was reduced to calling for help. Help, fortunately, was available, for Isabel, his Indian concubine, who was following him on the second expedition, had long since roused the whole vessel with her screams. Veraga and Ocambo launched a boat and the ex-Governor of Coquibaboa had the humiliation of being dragged half drowned from the water by his two dishonest colleagues. When they got to Santo Domingo, they handed him over to the Governor of that fortress. Meantime they had opened the strong-box, the occasion of so much quarreling, and divided its contents between themselves.

Cuevas caught a glimpse of Indian Isabel in her husband's prison. She was dressed in Spanish style with the mantilla and the skirt with wide hip-folds. This rich costume, now decidedly the worse for wear, Don Alonso had bought in Seville while taking on supplies for his expedition. Whenever Ojeda had any money in his hands he was inclined, in keeping with his reckless disposition, to spend it thoughtlessly and to little purpose. Such expensive and delicate garments were wholly out of place on a ship at sea, and especially among the hazards of such a voyage. "Doña" Isabel, however, had submitted, obedient as always. But on finding herself again in familiar scenes, among people of her own race, she shed one by one the regalia of feminine Europe; and within a year after arriving at Santo Domingo she was dressing like other Indian women who were wives or

concubines of Spaniards, amplifying the traditional cotton apron of her race with a strip of cloth to suggest the somewhat higher social station conferred upon her by her relationship with a white man.

Cuevas noted in Doña Isabel a striking resemblance to the unfortunate Queen Gold Flower. She had the same light complexion, the same suppleness of figure, the same luxuriant sensuousness. She was indeed a more youthful Anacaona, and perhaps more feminine, free as she could well be of the majestic pose expected of Caonabo's consort. She was, at any rate, a fit companion for an adventurous conquistador, ready with an Indian's woodcraft to guide her "man" through the tropical wilderness, to cook his meals over the open fire, to clean his weapons on days of repose, to attend him as obedient servant and slave during the long monotonous hours he had to spend on the quarterdeck of his caravel. Like most women of the primitive peoples, she would probably wither at a very early age. She could not have been more than twenty; yet here she was the matron grown, the round lines of her body already promising from a distance rapid and premature decrepitude.

Ojeda finally settled with his Indian wife on the outskirts of Santo Domingo in a cabin which Cuevas and other comrades of the laborious days in Isabella were eager to help him build. The Captain seemed indifferent to what was taking place in the colony about him. What did he care for an enterprise in which he could figure just as one more among thousands? He was of the breed of men who conquer empires and found cities of their own! He had been born to command and not to obey! If he was living in that lifeless environment it was just to

get his due through litigation that would put him once more in possession of his rightful earnings.

That he was much annoyed by the way things were going was evident to everyone. He was like a fish floundering among the meshes of a net too pliant and too tough to break. Judges, lawyers, notaries were beginning to be the most important personages in the colony. As Cuevas put it, one half the town was always at law with the other half. Whether miner, farmer, or explorer, no Spaniard but believed himself somehow robbed somewhere and under obligations to bring suit against some other Spaniard. Ojeda was a poor man but many were envious of his glory and he had hurt many feelings by his haughty bearing as a fighter ever ready to pick a quarrel or avenge a slight. Suddenly he saw himself sentenced by the island judge to quit-claim the earnings of his fleet, and furthermore declared a debtor to the Crown, since his sometime partners made affidavit that he had secreted the percentage due the royal treasury. He then appealed to the higher courts in Spain, writing to Bishop Fonseca also about his troubles. Thanks to that influential churchman he was able in the end to win his case. But what justice! The expenses of the litigation far exceeded the sums his partners owed him and even the whole contents of the disputed box. If his final victory cleared his name of all reproach, he was known to have been left poorer than he had been before his first voyage. He doubted whether he would ever be able to leave Santo Domingo at the head of a new expedition. He was issuing triumphant from the hands of Justice, but a ruined man.

Contemptuous as a rule of Island doings, he did condescend to stop casually one day in the great square at



Santo Domingo to see what had drawn the crowd. Standing there at the road side he had watched Queen Gold Flower go by on her way to the gibbet. Though accustomed by preference and profession to the shedding of blood, he had turned his eyes away from this execution, inwardly cursing the inane barbarities of Ovando and the purposeless death of this unhappy woman. There was no trace of love in his pitying protest. The day he had passed with Flor de Oro was at the most a hazy memory in his distant past. Sentiment toward women had receded to the far background in his tumultuous thoughts. His eye was on wealth, that he might indulge the pleasure of lavish giving; and above all else, on authority, for the acrid satisfactions that come from wielding power! The thing he could not bear in his present situation was to see himself unrecognized, forgotten, in that island which he had been the first to explore!

Cuevas came to take his former captain's presence as a matter of course. Ojeda, somehow, was a different person in his eyes. The old Don Alonso was a man one thought of as in the forefront of some hazardous adventure, never as an unfortunate, appealing to one's pity.

Meantime Fernando's own affairs were tending to sever him from his old commander. He and Lucero were getting rich—not the rapid, dazzling fortune that came to some people over night, but the slow, modest prosperity of the accumulating surplus, within the reach of any man in the colony who was willing to devote himself to agriculture and to keep out of trouble. An aged Indian woman, widow of a lesser chief in the interior, had come to know Lucero while the latter and her husband were living at the mines. For Alonsico in particular, who adored her



almost as a second mother, the Indian woman had conceived the kind of admiration a dog might have for its master, or a slave for some being of divine origin. Her fortune—two square leagues of land inherited from her husband the chief—was of little moment in a country where the whites were already receiving grants to be measured by the days' march; but it was located fortunately on a river bank and consisted for the most part of very fertile meadows. On the occasion of the aged squaw's conversion to Christianity the Bachelor-at-Law Enciso, who had started to practice at Santo Domingo and become good friends with Cuevas and Don Alonso, took charge of legalizing her titles. She had expressed at that time a desire that on her death the lands pass to Fernando and his wife, and thereafter to Alonsico, and that meantime Fernando should work the lands in her name sharing half and half.

Cuevas was already doing his best with them, lamenting only that his available capital did not permit him as yet to undertake extensive cultivations. The sugar cane was beginning to get a foot-hold on Hispaniola in plantations that became famous in history as venerable ancestors of the great *ingenios* of a later day. The Conquistadores were succeeding at last in acclimating in this new world the reed of Asiatic origin which the Moors had transplanted to Spain centuries before. Finally Cuevas obtained from the new governor Ovando, and later from the Friar of St. Jerome who succeeded that gentleman in the Island government, a number of Indian peons "designated" to him, by law to till the soil under his charge. But the Indians were not good workers—only by intimidation could one get any profitable effort

out of them at all. But better things were in store. One day a friar landed from a vessel in the harbor at Santo Domingo and delivered a letter to Cuevas, and with the letter a little package that had been sent on from Cordoba. The package contained a bag, and the bag a glorious assortment of gold coins! Doctor Acosta was remembering Lucero and he was remembering Alonsico—who could say whether with a grandparent's pride? The money came as a godsend to the little family. Cuevas was now able to apply himself to the development of his properties on a much larger scale.

But this engrossing activity caused him to lose sight of his former captain for many months. Don Alonso was sulking in his cabin with Isabel, his concubine—she had already blessed him with two half-breed children. On just what he was living was not so clear: he would have periods of apparent prosperity and reckless spending, followed by other periods of a poverty equally apparent. Perhaps he would place a mortgage from time to time on the lands he had received in grant from the King and Queen. Perhaps he would win occasionally at cards at the expense of adventurers returning from the mines in the interior or from some unlicensed voyage of discovery. Ever ready for a fight with ne'er-do-wells of his own stamp in the colony he was party to frequent duels, always issuing from them without a scratch as was his custom.

Then one day Fernando heard that he had disappeared. He had set out, so people said, with a crowd of men as reckless and as desperate as he, in an unseaworthy vessel inadequately rationed, to make another attempt to found the city of "Holy Cross" in the main-

land province of which he was governor by royal patent. But shortly he was back again, poorer than ever, more dejected than ever—and with only a few of his companions: the others had left their bones on ground which seemed unwilling to recognize the governorship of Don Alonso de Ojeda.

If Fernando from time to time felt a tickling of the adventuresome spirit of old, it was Lucero, now a prudent mother and a saving housewife, who had the cold water ready for such flares of heroism.

“Gold?” she would say scornfully. “Let Don Alonso and fellows of his kind go chasing their gold! We have been earning an honest living, raising our corn, our pigs, our cows. Let them go to sea—we’ll sell them the supplies for their vessels! Then, with God’s help, they will be working for us, while we sit comfortably at home!”

And her husband could not contest the practical wisdom of words otherwise so prosaic. Moreover, his laborious struggle with his land from day to day left him ever tired at night, too tired to be responsive to the call of empires and glories that lay to the West. Was not Lucero right after all? People like Ojeda were wonderful—you had to admire them! But they were a different sort of human being. It was money in the pocket to admire them at a safe distance and never get entangled in their ruinous escapades.

It was in this somnolent and unromantic state of mind that Fernando Cuevas received a piece of news one afternoon: on the twentieth day of May in the Year of Our Lord 1506 a famous man had died at Valladolid in Spain.

His name was Don Cristobal Colón, sometime Don Out-at-Elbows, and thereafter Lord High Admiral of the Ocean Sea, and Viceroy of All New Found Lands.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ADMIRAL'S LAST MIRAGE

Cuevas and Lucero had seen the Admiral for the last time before his death in Santo Domingo itself. The Governor of the Island had just brought him on in a caravel from Jamaica, where he had been marooned for some months, his vessels destroyed by shipworm and most of his crews in mutiny.

This Fourth Voyage, financed by the Sovereigns after many delays and much hesitation with a view to restoring Don Cristobal's prestige after the fiasco of his Third Voyage, had been one misfortune following on another. After lying off Santo Domingo for a time without obtaining Ovando's permission to disembark, the Admiral struck out westward to look for the Straits which were to give him access to the real lands of the Grand Khan and the Mouths of the Ganges.

The elements seemed to conspire with his personal ailments to make his last adventure as a sailor of imagination perhaps the saddest of his career. He was continually beset by storms. A virulent rheumatism held him nailed to his cot. Finally he had a bed made on the quarter-deck of his flagship that he might direct the navigation while still flat on his back. More and more apparent the disturbances in his mind: he was now talking of phan-

toms that visited him at night to encourage him and plot his courses.

Under these conditions he coasted shores that were later to be called Panama, Costa Rica, and Honduras, but which he embraced at the time under the general name of Veragua. Veragua was to be the last gilded illusion of his life, the last fancy born of his unquenchable thirst for wealth and power. Natives on the mainland told the envoys he sent ashore of countries near at hand where people dressed in long tunics and wore golden ornaments on their heads and arms—references doubtless to the civilizations of Yucatan and Mexico. But such reports served only to whet the Admiral's geographical delusions anew. He was more than ever convinced the countries described by Marco Polo lay before him. At one time he asserted that a march of ten days into the interior of Veragua would bring him to the banks of the Ganges and the famous cities of India.

The rapid reconnoissances conducted by his men in the villages near the shore were far from being an adequate exploration of the new lands. But since many of the chiefs he now encountered wore great plaques of gold on their chests—"mirrors" he called them for lack of a better word—he was certain he had stumbled on some of the richest gold deposits in the world. He began to doubt now whether the mines on Hispaniola were the "Gold of Ophir" after all. That distinction he transferred to the mines hidden somewhere near him in the lands called Veragua.

Off the coast one day he sighted a great canoe, larger than any he had seen on the western ocean. It was covered with a canopy of woven straw, and carried many pas-



sengers in addition to the paddlers, and a cargo of curious objects which seemed to presuppose a certain complexity of civilization. This primitive "merchant-man" came from the north where the natives must have worn clothes and used many gold ornaments. The Admiral regarded it as a first positive sample of the Asiatic shipping that threaded the Straits and plied between the islands of the Empire of the Grand Khan.

At one point, on the bank of a river to be called Belén, he thought of building a fort as a nucleus of the colony. He had to desist, however, before the stout resistance of the natives, who were much better fighters than the Indians on Hispaniola and always used arrows dipped in a deadly poison.

Before long shipworm began doing its deadly work and he was obliged to hurry homeward. He made Jamaica with his vessels sinking under him. On beaching them, they were found to be beyond repair. He left them, their bottoms gone, standing like so many wooden buildings on the strand. He got along for some months on food which the natives brought to his crews in exchange for trinkets. But such sources of supply were very precarious and finally gave out altogether. On this voyage he had taken Fernandico along—his son by Beatrice Arana. The presence of this heir of his line, whom he adored as he did all the members of his family, served to increase his worries.

As had happened at other times in his career, the majority of his crews rose against him; and his brother, Don Bartholomew, supported by such sailors as remained faithful, fought bloody battles with the mutineers—to

the delight of the natives who looked on in glee as these Sons of Heaven began killing one another.

Word had to be carried somehow to Hispaniola, the nearest point from which help could be obtained. Finally a Spanish sailor, named Fernando Mendez, performed one of the most startling feats recorded in the annals of adventure in the New World. Taking an Indian canoe with one white man and some Indian paddlers he set out over the two hundred miles of tide rip that lie between Jamaica and Haiti. Reaching Santo Domingo after unheard of perils, he reported the Admiral's plight to Governor Ovando, who despatched a caravel to Jamaica to bring the survivors of the Fourth Voyage home. Terrible hatreds had sprung up among Don Cristobal's sailors and they renewed about the streets of the capital the brawls and quarrels which had divided them on the shores of Jamaica.

The people in Santo Domingo has cursed and insulted the Admiral when he left their town in chains some years before. Now they had a change of heart as they saw him lying sick unto death and evidently ruined forever. Such consolation he sorely needed; for the dreams which had always been his greatest spiritual support were now shattered beyond recall. Ovando lodged him in his own house and he received there the homage of many former enemies who came to greet him with the commiseration due his misfortunes. He seemed particularly pleased with a visit from Fernando and Lucero, the two homeless wayfarers whom he had found on the road to Cordoba and who had been his pages on the first and most glorious of his adventures.

And another friend of the old days came in to Santo Domingo at just this time—Señor Juan de la Cosa. The great pilot had been busy all the while with voyage after voyage. Of some of these he would talk quite freely; others he barely hinted in circumspect words or left unmentioned altogether. To outfit an expedition in the ports of Spain a captain had to obtain a charter from the Sovereigns. But since such privileges involved influence and long delays, adventurers were setting out into the unknown seas at their own risk and expense without telling where they were going and making no report of what they discovered. People in Santo Domingo had heard of many such voyages undertaken without royal permit.

In addition to the expeditions of Alonso de Ojeda and of the scrivener Bastidas which he had captained himself, Juan de la Cosa knew all about that of Alonso Niño of Moguer, and that of Vicente Yañez Pinzon, the most recent one of all. Martin Alonso's brother commanded the *Niña* on the Voyage of Discovery; but he had not thought of any further explorations so long as Don Cristobal held the monopoly of such ventures. He and his family would have nothing to do with the man who had quarreled with Martin Alonso! But when the gates of the ocean, so to speak, were opened to all he set out with a fleet of four vessels financed by a syndicate of unusually rapacious speculators. He personally was more interested in discovery than in making money. One of the first Europeans to see the Southern Cross and other stars of the southern heavens, he was the very first to reach the north coast of Brazil and traverse the sea of fresh water formed in the ocean by the great stream later called the Amazon. Not so lucky as Bas-

tidas and others, who found pearls in abundance, he returned to Spain with simple cargoes of dye woods—and these his creditors straightway seized.

On the other hand, Juan de la Cosa would say nothing of a secret voyage he must have made with Amerigo Vespucci to the north of the Veragua of which the Admiral talked so much. That he had made such a voyage seemed evident to Cuevas from certain things Juan de la Cosa said and which could be explained on no other hypothesis. Indeed he had made not one but probably several unlicensed voyages. For one thing he was rich. To be sure, he and Bastidas on their return to Spain, had been acquitted of illegal traffic on Hispaniola and had recovered most of the proceeds of their fortunate voyage. But Juan de la Cosa's prosperity was too great to be accounted for in that manner. Besides, the charts which he had recently designed showed precise indications of lands which had never been visited by any of the authorized expeditions—and Juan de la Cosa was not a man of imagination: he kept strictly to facts as ascertained, and was never prone to conjectures based on fancy or hearsay!

A level-headed, practical sailor, he still laughed sarcastically every time the Admiral was quoted to him. He considered the Discoverer as by this time far behind everyone else in knowledge of the New World.

"He has learned nothing; he has forgotten nothing," Juan de la Cosa once said in conversation with Ojeda and Cuevas.

The Admiral was still clinging to his Marco Polo and his Maundeville. He still thought he had reached Asia. Scholars, and even ignorant sailors, who had not been

misled by any strong preconceptions, had a sounder notion of the situation in the Western Ocean than he. Scientists in Spain holding traditional views about the size of the earth and unable to take the Admiral's geography seriously were more and more inclined to think that a new world had been found. Whereas Don Cristobal was all the more set in his views as old age crept upon him. His fancies would not yield even to evidence of demonstrated fact. Not only did he stick to his geography. He thought the arts of navigation still a secret known only to himself. He announced one day in the presence of Ovando and Juan de la Cosa—the latter he still regarded as the one pilot worth his consideration—that he intended to keep the bearings of Veragua to himself and averred that no one would ever be able to find the place. He always prohibited his sailors and captains from keeping logs and taking notes, and mercilessly destroyed such records as he found in their hands. Nevertheless, as Juan de la Cosa knew, Torres, and other sailors of the First Voyage even, had plotted offhand in his presence courses just as accurate as those of the Admiral.

Yet one element of greatness never deserted the sometime Don Out-at-Elbows: the power to impart to others the thrill of his own golden illusions. Here he was in Santo Domingo, a ruined discredited man. But he filled the Island with the radiance of those "mirrors of gold" which he had seen on the "kings" of Veragua and which could mean nothing less than the Mines of King Solomon near at hand! By the time he set out for Spain, much improved by his rest in the colonial capital, everyone was talking of the enchanted Veragua, the Golden Chersonese of old, where the natives wore clothes and had



big ships, and the precious metal lay about in piles requiring no work to extract it from the ground. The visionary Discoverer was to give one more lease of life before his death to the gilded chimæra that had hovered over his First Voyage.

When news of Don Cristobal's death reached the colony, Ojeda had long been hankering for a trip to Veragua. Someone had to get that gold! And, after the fiasco of the Colons in the government of Hispaniola, the Sovereigns would not be looking so kindly upon the claims of that ambitious family! But feelings of jealousy and wounded pride came to exacerbate Ojeda's dejection as he lived on in the colony. The old friend of his youth, Diego de Nicuesa, had come to the island in the retinue of Governor Ovando. Like Ojeda himself, Nicuesa was a little man, strong of arm and quick of foot, and a master in all branches of horsemanship and in the use of weapons. As daring as the Knight of the Virgin in his enterprises he was much more thoughtful and thorough-going in his preparations. He had beside perquisites in which Ojeda was entirely lacking: he could play a guitar; and he could sing all kinds of songs in excellent voice—attainments these, which, on occasion, made him more popular with the ladies than Ojeda could hope to be. Add to that his wealth and his family connections, and he enjoyed a definite and general superiority over his friend, who remained just a heroic adventurer.

The rivalries resulting had finished by spoiling their friendship. In his retirement at Santo Domingo Ojeda was still highly esteemed for his past feats among the rowdies and the men-at-arms; but he had little standing with the prosperous money-earning colonists, who de-



spised him because of his poverty. It was a bitter pill for him to see Nicuesa moving about in prominent circles on the island, enjoying the intimacy of the governor, and possessing an open road to all sorts of favors. Coming to Santo Domingo with money in his pocket, Nicuesa had made many profitable investments through Ovando's support and grown richer still. Now his name, his prestige, and his fortune were so great that the colony was sending him to Spain as its representative to negotiate many matters which required careful adjustment at Court.

Ojeda meantime was paying frequent visits to Juan de la Cosa. The veteran pilot had taken up residence in the capital, in one of the more luxurious stone houses built by his former comrade, the pilot Roldan, and was living on his money, contemplating for the moment no further voyages. Indeed, Juan de la Cosa was quite satisfied with his position. He knew that in planning any new expeditions investors would be certain to come to him without his troubling to seek favors or employment from them. Yet somehow the impetuous Ojeda exerted an irresistible fascination upon this shrewd sea-dog ordinarily so level-headed. The Knight of the Virgin could hardly wait for a chance to conquer the marvelous lands of Veragua and thence pass on to the countries where the Indians wore clothes! And the famous captain was soon shaken from his self-satisfied quiescence.

Events were turning favorably to the young hidalgo's ambitions. Queen Isabella had died shortly before Columbus and His Highness, Don Ferdinand, deep in his wars in Naples and on the French frontier, had placed the management of everything touching the New World in

the hands of Monsignor Fonseca, now Bishop of Burgos. This austere personage always liked and admired Don Alonso, whose heroic deeds had well repaid the patronage so far accorded him.

Don Alonso put the matter bluntly to Juan de la Cosa. The latter was rich! Could he not go to Spain and ask the celebrated bishop in Ojeda's name to obtain for the two of them the privilege of conquering Veragua and other countries on the mainland? Juan de la Cosa's reputation as a sea captain would be sure to win a favorable hearing from the King!

The famous pilot became as excited about the project as Ojeda himself. He could hardly wait to get back to Spain. But Nicuesa meantime had conceived similar plans and his friends on the Island were sure that he would make use of his stay in Spain to apply for that very charter—and probably with success because of the influence he had at court as a cadet of the Admiral of Castile, the King's uncle. Ojeda concluded that in the face of this competition the support of his patron, the Bishop, and the personal solicitation of the Cantabrian pilot would not be enough.

But Cuevas had likewise succumbed to the lure of Veragua. Dreams and enthusiasms of a boyish conquistador seemed suddenly to come to life again in him. Why live and die in that dull monotonous routine of farm life which did bring him in a living, but nothing comparable to the fortune one might make in a marvelous land of gold! Strangest of all, the golden haze that hung about Veragua dazzled Lucero too. She had always talked her husband down when the subject of gold came up. She much preferred the tranquil, more wholesome prosperity

of agriculture. But she could not resist the Veragua madness that attacked everyone in the colony. People had been talking of the wealth of Asia for twelve years past, always looking for it, never finding it. Well, it must be somewhere! Don Cristobal could not have been altogether mistaken!

The Knight of the Virgin no sooner had an idea than he must put it into execution: Fernando Cuevas should go back to Spain along with Juan de la Cosa! Fernando had a great friend at court. Was not Doctor Acosta writing to Lucero all the time, even sending her money? The Doctor had saved the King's life at the time of the attempt on his person at Barcelona. Even without that, Acosta was one of the prominent men in the realm and sure to have the King's ear. Doctor Acosta, added to Bishop Fonseca, added to Don Cristobal's senior captain—there was a combination that would bring results! Besides, Doctor Acosta was a rich man. He might be persuaded to invest in the future enterprise—Don Alonso was taking it for granted that the discovery of Veragua had caused as much excitement in Spain as it had in Santo Domingo!

Cuevas found no great difficulty in inducing his wife to accept the idea of his voyage. It would last a year at the most—surely with such support it would not take long to procure the royal charter. There would be no great harm in dropping the work on their new lands for such a short time. In the interval Lucero could move back into their old home on the outskirts of the capital. There was nothing to fear on the score of her position as a woman. With the arrival of regular families from Spain, life in the colony had settled down. The license and

drunken brawling of the days of Isabella were a thing of the past: for that matter, Don Alonso would be there to look after her. No one would think of troubling a woman who had such a doughty protector!

When señor Juan de la Cosa and Fernando Cuevas landed in Cadiz some months later, they could not help remarking one great difference between the environment they had just left and the metropolis in which they now found themselves: Don Cristobal had been quite forgotten, perhaps in the midst of the mourning for Queen Isabel. Only when they reached Seville, and somewhat later Cordoba, could they find a person who even remembered the deceased Admiral. As for Veragua, the Land of the Golden Mirrors and the bottomless Mines of King Solomon, Don Cristobal had given people just one more laugh. He had made three resounding fiascos since telling those wonderful stories on his return from his First Voyage! Hardly a village in Spain but could show some poor wretch who had come back from Hispaniola, his life ruined, his health gone. Scholars and experts in maritime affairs thought of Columbus now only to make fun of his absurd geography and the delusions to which he had clung to his very last breath, as though it were impossible for him to live without them.

King Ferdinand, now bereft of his consort, received the Admiral on his last return with the consideration due a man who had meant well but was obviously a little off his balance and in full physical decadence. The Monarch joked away the Discoverer's suggestion of a fifth fleet to make one more effort to reach the Grand Khan and the Ganges. Hadn't they lost fleets enough already—between the two of them? The proposal, moreover, had come at a

moment when the King was busy with preparations for the return to Spain of his son-in-law, Philip the Fleming, and of his daughter, Juana, Philip's wife. Philip was openly hostile to King Ferdinand. As for Juana, she was madly in love with her husband and was always obeying him in preference to her father. Sink any more money in the Western Ocean? The King hardly had the funds to carry out his military and diplomatic policies!

For that matter, Don Fernando was the only one to pay any attention whatever to the old Admiral, and that mostly out of regard for the memory of Queen Isabel. A man with a real sorrow is inclined to benevolence toward those still older and more unfortunate than he. Ferdinand suggested postponing the matter of the fifth voyage until some later date. Meantime he was anxious to do anything for the Admiral's personal comfort that might be possible. Regulations had just been issued laying severe penalties on any man caught riding a mule. The King thought the easy gait of that animal was playing havoc with the horsemanship of his knights. Mules therefore could be used only by women and clerics. However, Ferdinand issued a decree which made Don Cristobal Colon the one man in Spain privileged to wear a sword and at the same time to ride a mule!

The Admiral was not rich. The mines on Hispaniola once touted as the Mines of King Solomon, were not very productive as yet. The income from the colony was amounting to something like 35,000 modern dollars the year round. His own share of these earnings was quite inconsiderable. Yet the Admiral felt he needed to live like one of the rich men of his time, showing his high rank by the number of domestics who accompanied his



every step. Seven such were with him when he died.

Doctor Acosta was able to furnish more details of the Admiral's passing. Don Cristobal remembered Beatrice Enriquez de Arana in his testament, and expressed repentance for his ingratitude toward her. Nevertheless, he made no provision for her material welfare, contenting himself with urging his children not to forget her. Ingratitude was one of the indelible traits in the race of the Colons. They seemed to consider no one who was not of their blood. Years later in Santo Domingo Cuevas was to meet the man named Diego Mendez, who had made the wonderful trip from Jamaica to Hispaniola by canoe in order to bring succor to the stranded fleet of the Fourth Voyage. Mendez was present at the death-bed in Valladolid; and he also was commended in the Admiral's testament to the younger Colons. Yet, when Don Diego Colon came to Hispaniola to rule as Viceroy, Mendez was unable to procure any sort of respectable employment from him.

Columbus died in the belief that he had reached Asia by the route West. During his last days he wrote a letter to the Pope boasting that he had explored twelve hundred miles of Asiatic shore and many adjoining islands, among them Cipango. Gabriel the Physician explained the neglect in which Columbus passed his last days partly by the evident inaccuracy with which he talked of the New World. The First Voyage was the only one to make any deep impression. Of the others he made fantastic reports which no well-informed person could take at all seriously. He described the countries he had visited not as an eye-witness, but in accord with the fancies he had collected from mediæval tales dealing with Asia.



Coming to the matter of Don Alonso's enterprise, Doctor Acosta took no stock in the riches of Veragua. He even expressed surprise that a practical seaman like Juan de la Cosa should think of putting hard-earned money into the rediscovery of the Mines of King Solomon which the Admiral had finally located on the mainland to the West.

"As for myself," the Doctor concluded, "I shall not risk a farthing in any such undertaking, in spite of my interest in Fernando and his wife. I shall of course be glad to use any influence I may have with the King to obtain a charter for your expedition. You gentlemen are professional sailors and soldiers. You enjoy such adventures! Why should you not be allowed to have them?"

The conversation finally turned on the man Amerigo Vespucci who had returned to Seville after several voyages and was writing a story of his experiences. The Doctor thought him quite as imaginative and unreliable as the Admiral, resembling the latter as one pea another.

"He claims for himself things that were done by other explorers," said the Doctor, "speaking as though he had been captain of voyages on which, at the most, he sailed as navigator's apprentice. However, he is going to print his memoirs—and who knows what a success they will have!"

And the story book of this pupil of Juan de la Cosa, geographically as absurd as the letters of Columbus, though without the saving grace of the Admiral's poetry and eloquence, was in fact printed one day by a little Academy in St. Die in the Vosges Mountains in Switzer-

land as preface to a new edition of Ptolemy's Geography. But Gabriel the Physician could never have imagined that the book would give to the new lands which Columbus had called "Asia," the name of "America," devised to honor a clerk in a spice store of Seville!

Such was the depth of forgetfulness in which the man who had discovered the New World died at Valladolid after his fruitless search for the Grand Khan's empire.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST BLOOD

The most frequented spot within the limits of Santo Domingo was the "Four Corners," the point where the two most important streets of the city crossed each other. Ovando the Governor had given much thought to enlarging and embellishing the town, and when Don Diego Colon succeeded his father as Admiral of the Ocean Sea and Viceroy of New Found Lands—that was in the Year of Our Lord, 1508—Santo Domingo began to acquire greater importance. The colonists were boasting that no town in Spain was better planned, unless possibly Barcelona; and that their cathedral, still in process of construction, was to be as great and beautiful as any in Europe. Houses had first been built of wood or clay in Indian style with roofs of thatch; but there were any number of quarries within easy reach and as soon as the Indians had been taught to work for the white men the number of stone houses rapidly increased.

On one side of the Ocema, a deep navigable stream, lay farm lands, gardens, orchards with orange trees, cassias, apples, pears, brought on from Europe; on the other, rose the city, its broad well-ordered avenues stretching from the river between rows of more and more attractive houses out into green savannas. A fortress defended the mouth of the river and buildings lined its very banks,

so that the biggest vessels, even those that plied the deep sea, could anchor under their very walls, landings being made over simple gangplanks laid from deck to shore. Some of the richer colonists were building great mansions of stone, and boastfully predicting that when the King of Spain came to visit his new possessions he would be happy to find worthy palaces to stay in.

The cattle introduced with the earlier voyages had now multiplied into herds so great that leather was now being regularly exported to Spain. A large force of cavalry was maintained exclusively on native horses. In course of time many cattle and hogs had strayed away into the wilderness and turned wild, filling the forests with a kind of game hitherto unknown. So also dogs and cats brought from Spain as family pets were developing a wild progeny in the mountains.

The population was growing perhaps a little too large for the inner tranquillity of the city, not so much because of the mere numbers as of the kind of people who composed it. Ovando had himself brought a strong force of men-at-arms—penniless hidalgos for the most part, eager for adventure and expecting to win riches at the point of the sword. Every vessel that came in from Spain brought immigrants of the same sort, and this great concentration of war-like energies lay stagnant in the capital, the Governor finding no ready outlet for such explosive material. All the Indian chiefs having offered their submission, the wars in the interior of the island had come to an end. The poorer hidalgos in Santo Domingo kept agitating for new voyages of discovery, but funds were lacking to finance them. Besides, Don Diego Colon, the new Viceroy, discouraged initiative on

the part of individual Conquistadores, insisting that everything discovered belonged to him as scion and heir of the late Admiral. If the colonists went over his head to the court in Spain they found that it required years of patient intrigue supported by all the influence they could command to get a hearing from Sovereigns interested for the most part in strictly European policies.

The island abounded in younger sons of noble and wealthy families in Spain, and there were not a few knights of the Military Orders of Calatrava and Alcantara. Brushing elbows with these were descendants of the lower Spanish gentry who considered themselves not less noble because unquestionably they were poorer. Indeed, the one essential division in the ranks of this throng of haughty, overbearing youths accustomed to sword play and to talking with the Sovereigns of Spain on an equal footing, was between those who had money and those who had none—a classification that seems to assert itself everywhere in humanity. Such as had made their fortunes in the island held aloof in haughty exclusiveness from the others, issuing from their stone mansions in the capital only to treat with their financial equals or with the Viceroy. The unlucky ones loitered about the “Four Corners,” to boast of the feats at arms they had performed in Europe, of their voyages with Don Cristobal Colon (they called him the “Old Admiral” now, to distinguish him from his son, the “Boy Admiral”), or of their adventures under Ojeda and Bastidas.

The cape was considered in those days an essential part of a gentleman’s costume, whether in winter or in summer (it proved useful, among other things, in concealing the wear and tear inevitable in trousers and

undergarments). Yet many of these future Conquistadores were striding about in genteel attire, their hands on the hilts of their swords—but nevertheless without capes. Some of them would say that they had “eaten their capes,” that, in other words, they had pawned or sold them to get money to live on. Others would more frankly confess that they had “drunk” them.

A conspicuous and an important figure about the “Four Corners” was the famous captain, Don Alonso de Ojeda, hail-fellow-well-met among these vain and dangerous and credulous vagabonds whom he always addressed with a familiarity that filled them with pride. He was almost as poor as they were, yet somehow he always had money to lend. Everyone knew the stories of his off-hand prodigality in moments of prosperity. Don Alonso was the legendary hero of the colony: his adventures had passed from mouth to mouth with all the embellishments of the fireside story. His capture of Caonabo was so far the big event in the history of the New World. Of his skill and agility as a fencer, of his endurance, of the titanic strength that seemed so wholly out of proportion with his diminutive stature, they had daily evidence before their eyes. Don Alonso had also been fortunate in having among his admirers that young scholar who had attended him on his visit to the ill-fated Gold Flower. The youth could describe Ojeda’s virtues in unforgettable phrases adapted from the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. Who else would ever have called him “Don Alonso of the Winged Feet”?

Ojeda’s popularity, always sincere and unbiased enough, became even greater when Santo Domingo learned that Captain Juan de la Cosa and Fernando



Cuevas were in Spain negotiating a royal charter which would permit him to undertake the conquest of Veragua, "Land of the Golden Mirrors." To be sure, there would be a long time to wait! But these young men were trained to interminable voyages about an unknown mysterious world. Time and distance had lost the values familiar in the Old World; and till the moment should come for Don Alonso to raise his standard, they gathered about him and courted him as their future captain, each one nursing an ambition perhaps to become his chief lieutenant.

Among these audacious soldiers, most of them destined to obscure deaths, though others were one day to make fortunate conquests of vast empires, a few seemed to merit the special predilection of the Captain. Not over thirty himself, he was nevertheless looked upon as master by men much his senior in age. He was on intimate terms with a certain Diego Velasquez, a good soldier even if a trifle fat, and with another man, pompous in speech and showy in manner, named Panfilo de Narvaez. The admiration these gentlemen had for the young captain was quite disinterested, since the Viceroy, the junior Colon, had announced a project of sending them to conquer Cuba, an island still unexplored.

Another favorite was a young man of very white complexion with bright eyes and a reddish beard. He came from Medellin, in Extremadura. What Don Alonso most admired in him was his facility at memorizing poetry, his loquacity in regard to women, and a quickness of wit that extricated him from most embarrassing situations. The youth had begun his career as a student at Salamanca; but he had thought it better to seek a change of

air when his fellow-townsmen in Medellin discovered an affair of his with a married lady through his falling one night from a high wall along which he was making his way to her window. This versatile student was as handy with the guitar as he was with the sword. His name by baptism was Hernando Cortés, though his friends disfigured his former appellative at will, calling him now "Fernando," now "Hernando," and at other times still, "Hernan." He had come on from Spain in the vessel that brought Ovando, and that governor, also a man from Extremadura, had taken kindly to him, giving him divers grants of land and a number of Indian slaves. But the advent of Don Diego Colon had brought a change in the fortunes of Hernando Cortés. He had spent all his money and now knew no other protector than that Don Alonso de Ojeda who was the master of them all.

"My little captain," Cortés would say, "pray count on me as one of Your Grace's soldiers when you set out for Veragua. Not only would I go there, at Your Grace's bidding; I would just as willingly go to Hell!"

Two other men also figured in Don Alonso's more particular coterie. The one, a silent, moody soldier, also from Extremadura, had come on from Spain with an expedition later than Ovando's. His name was Francisco Pizarro. Five or six years older than Don Alonso he might have been called the dean of the group about the young hero, though he deferred to the capturer of Caonabo with the reverence he would have paid to a father or an elder brother. The future conqueror of Peru thought himself as noble as the noblest magnate in Santo Domingo, though he was an illegitimate son of a man-at-arms who had always refused to own him. The father,

Don Gonzalo Pizarro, had spent most of his life fighting in Italy under Don Gonzalo de Cordoba and also under Caesar Borgia, son of Pope Alexander VI. His mother was a plain servant girl, Catalina by name, who had worked in a convent of nuns at Trujillo in Extremadura, the native town of the Pizarros. Bereft of his mother and repudiated by his father, Francisco Pizarro tended hogs as a boy in the hills of his native province. He could neither read nor write; but he had a native talent for warfare and great aptitudes as a leader of men. He seems to have made his way to Italy on foot to enlist in his father's regiment. But the elder Pizarro, known in Spain now as "the Roman" because of his service in Italy, and otherwise as "Long Legs" because of his great stature, refused to have anything to do with this young man who was presenting himself most inopportunately as his child. But of this episode in his life Don Francisco had little to say, though illegitimacy of birth in those days involved none of the disadvantages it was to have in European society later on.

"Don't forget me, Don Alonso," Pizarro would say after listening to one of Ojeda's expositions of his project. "If Your Grace wants an honest soldier who don't talk much but who don't know the meaning of the word 'fear' and of the word 'retreat', just call on me: I am your man!"

The other individual in question lived in a world apart from this mob of noisy, boastful, quarrelsome adventurers who had "eaten" or "drunk" their capes and were going about in genteel rags. Martin Fernandez de Enciso was proud owner of one of the new mansions of stone; and he passed for the most skillful and opulent attorney-at-

law in the new State of Santo Domingo. He was known to have laid aside in a very few years some two thousand gold castillians, a sum roundly equivalent to ten thousand modern dollars, and a great capital under the conditions then prevailing in the world. Enciso had turned to good profit one of the innate weaknesses of the Spaniards in the colony—their mania for going to law with their neighbors on any or all pretexts. But though a man of some learning Martin Fernandez was as intrepid in courage and as fond of sword-play as any of the young hidalgos. Indeed he was suffering from the spiritual canker that was gnawing at the hearts of all who came to the New World: a discontent with the humdrum routine of life, a thirst for excitement and adventure, dreams of fabulous wealth to be amassed over night in the romantic conquest of some mysterious land. Don Alonso was very attentive to this young lawyer and played skillfully upon the man's romantic inclinations. With the instinct of a man-at-arms trained to perceive and to utilize all available resources, he had his eye on those two thousand shiny castillians which some day might play a part in his future enterprise.

Withdrawing sometimes from the boisterous throng that gathered at the "Four Corners" and from his more quiet talks with the learned Enciso, Don Alonso would turn his steps toward the farm on the outskirts of the capital where the wife of his friend and emissary was living with her child Alonsico.

Manners were changing rapidly in the social life of Santo Domingo. Ladies of noble birth were now becoming frequent in the colony. Don Diego Colon, the Viceroy, had brought thither Doña Maria Enriquez,

niece to the Duke of Alba, and a blood relation of His Highness, King Ferdinand the Catholic. The sometime "Don Out-at-Elbows" had succeeded before his death in marrying his son to one of the noblest ladies in the Spanish realm, to a woman indeed of royal lineage (though he never ceased complaining down to the hour of his death of Spain's ingratitude and forgetfulness!). And the Vicereine had set up a little court in the capital, bringing on from Spain a number of gentlewomen, rich and poor, with the idea of finding husbands for them among the more prosperous colonists. Santo Domingo had long been a military camp. It was now a center of fashion quite comparable to Seville and other Spanish towns. Gentlemen were growing more careful of dress and personal appearance; and they were repolishing hazy memories of formal salutations and other gestures of urbanity which they had learned in more youthful days in their motherland and forgotten among the hardships and adventures of a world hostile to the whites. At almost any hour of the day now cavaliers with their capes over their arms and their hands on the hilts of their swords could be seen on the river road doffing their plumed hats before the ladies-in-waiting of Doña Maria. And at night guitars were played about the streets, and romantic serenades, mingled with giggles and whispered words, stirred the darkness under the iron-barred windows of the stone mansions.

Don Alonso seemed to be wearying of the faithful Isabel and the little half-breeds with whom she had blessed him. Nowadays he was to be found at his home only at meal times and late at night. Otherwise he would be making his way toward the Cuevas farm, as though on



pretext of seeing that everything were well with Lucero, of assuring her that she was not forgotten, and could always count on his protection.

To tell the truth, a girl of Lucero's experience with the world in the course of two historic voyages and long years of adventurous and precarious livelihood in the Haitian wilderness, was quite able to take care of herself. Alonsico was now a grown youth, showing all the traits of courage and hardihood Lucero had known in his father. With him about, Lucero felt as secure in her house outside the town as she would have in a mansion on the main thoroughfare of Santo Domingo. On sailing for Europe Fernando had left behind his shield, his sword, his cavalry lance, and a cross-bow with which he hoped Alonsico would become an expert marksman. In addition to these weapons Lucero herself had the dagger she carried about her person during the days when she was living with her husband at the mines in constant danger of attack from rebellious Indians. She could only smile when Don Alonso would try to make her confess during his visits of an evening that she was often afraid in her relative solitude.

Actually she had known not a moment of fear. She was working the farm with four Indians who had been bonded to Fernando Cuevas. These peons she ordered about with all the assurance and authority of a man; and sometimes when she had work to do out of doors, and with a view as well to commanding respect from her peons, she would dress in the male garments she had worn during her expeditions with her husband into the interior. Lucero, in short, was a woman of the old style in the colony, a survivor of the ill-omened city of Isa-



bella where the first colonists had died by hundreds. She may have blushed the first day when Don Alonso came upon her walking about her farm in an attire unusual for people of her sex ; but later on she felt no embarrassment at all in receiving him in that costume.

Now that life in the colony was returning to the fashionable elegancies of Spain, she made a certain point of reminding people that she dated from the heroic epoch of the colony, and had been besieged and all but starved in the fortress of "Doubting Thomas." A tall, slender woman, not very vigorous in appearance, but possessed of a certain nervous strength which circumstances on occasion could call into evidence, she towered head and shoulders above the impetuous but diminutive Ojeda whenever he walked at her side. In the course of the past years Lucero and Don Alonso had seen each other only at rare intervals and always in the presence of Cuevas or other friends. The weeks in the fort at Saint Thomas during the siege of that encampment by Caonabo had been the period of their greatest intimacy.

Ojeda however began to find an increasing satisfaction in these evening conversations with his friend's wife. In the end he began visiting her every day as though the obligation which he was imposing upon himself gave a new interest to life. Sitting under the trees in the garden they would speculate as to what the emissaries who had gone to Spain in connection with the conquest of Veragua might be doing, or commenting and glossing over and over again the letters which came in with each caravel with news of the doings and the hopes of Fernando and the Captain. Or else they would talk of affairs in the colony: of the new sugar plantations that were growing

up and of the machinery that was being devised to treat the cane. The farm presented many problems. Some of the plants imported from Europe seemed, like most of the animals, to do well; others withered and died in their new environment.

And off on the dreamy horizons of that colonial life glittered the yellow haze of gold, gold that lay hidden beyond the seas to the westward in the mountains of Veragua! Why worry about crops and live stock, when near at hand, as the Old Admiral had insisted down to the day of his death, the marvelous Mines of King Solomon were to be had for the taking, and the Straits of the Golden Chersonese, a broad thoroughfare opening upon the true lands of the Grand Khan?

While his mother and his godfather would be talking of such weighty matters in the cool of the evening under rustling tree-tops in an atmosphere laden with tropical perfumes and quivering with the sounds of birds and insects, Alonsico would grow weary of the grave company of his elders, and eager for something more exciting, would begin hunting birds among the trees or playing with the Indian peons whose primitive language was more in the spirit of his own childish mind.

Don Alonso without a doubt was falling under the spell of these daily conversations with an attractive woman, so feminine in voice, in manner, in gracefulness, but at the same time with all the knowledge and with most of the experience of a full-fledged Conquistador. Sometimes she would receive him in her house gowns like any lady of the city; then again he would find her in shirt and trousers dressed like a soldier, her hands still soiled with work on the farm. And Don Alonso would begin com-

plaining of the loneliness in which he was living, momentarily forgetting his dreams and his ambitions; and the great deficiency in his life would come to the forefront of his thoughts.

Yes, he had missed something! He had gone hither and thither in the New World bruising over the isles of the Indians like one of those hurricanes that blew up in the tropical sky and threw the affairs of human beings into turmoil. He was indeed admired on both sides of the ocean wherever there were people to admire intrepid deeds. But he had never had a home! He had never known love! He had never found a woman to serve him as prop and counsellor, as Lucero had served and was serving Fernando Cuevas!

Whenever Lucero would remind him of the Indian, Isabel, on these occasions, Ojeda would lose his temper, as though such an allusion could only have been made in jest. No, the lament of the bronzed Conquistador was made in earnest! His voice would tremble with emotion and his eyes would grow dim behind a silvery curtain of tears. Famous for his feats at arms; noted even as a boy for his courage in the war against the Moors; and explorer with many daring voyages to his credit, the first indeed to have set out along the trail of the Old Admiral to hunt for the Grand Khan! And then, after all that, to find himself just a beggar in a half-built city of an Indian world, living in a thatched bohio like any Indian chief, his one companion a converted Indian squaw who at the most unexpected moments would revert to the customs of her savage forefathers! What a life!

As though to inspire greater interest on Lucero's part, to make her share all his secret worries, he would

sometimes talk at length of his life with the Indian woman who followed him everywhere more like a faithful dog than like an enamored human; and sometimes he would try, as it were, to deceive himself by casting a light of imaginary beauty upon his intimate relations with her. Returning to the manners of her people on occasion, Isabel would take off her European clothes and lie naked on the ground, her head in Ojeda's lap, looking up at him with the veneration a worshipper might have for some omnipotent idol. And as his gaze would fall upon that savage face he would half close his eyes as though to concentrate upon an image within him.

"Isabel! Isabel!" he would murmur softly, and that name, which he had laid upon her at the time of her baptism as a sort of magic charm, would seem to transform the face before him. The light bronze of her skin would turn entirely white, her black hair blond, her black eyes blue, and a tranquil almost queenly smile would gather about her lips and seem to acquire there a spirit of benevolent goodness. In that guise Isabel the Indian would be Isabel the Queen, the ideal love of his youth, a respectful chivalrous love, the inspiration of many a young paladin who besieged Granada, eager to distinguish himself before the eyes of the royal lady of his dreams.

"Isabel, Isabel," he would murmur again, and the blond head would darken, the blue eyes would become black again, and the majesty of a great lady of mature years would become a gushing, youthful beauty with all the freshness of green acid fruit or a budding flower; and he would see before him Isabel Herboso as she was before her father unwittingly sent her to her death in a

convent prison, as she had been when he carried her off in his arms that day from Cordoba to Seville. And he would lean forward to kiss the face in reverent melancholy homage to this second love which was coming to life again to attend him on his way through this strange, distant world.

But once his lips drew closer to the apparition, reality would triumph over fancy: the features of the adored Isabel would fade away and he would be left shivering with disgust at contact with this Indian savage who lay looking up at him in brutish submissiveness, smiling perhaps through her sharp white teeth, or weeping in the end at his unprovoked harshness.

A tragic life he was living indeed! Was there not some mysterious poison in the air about him that was filling his advancing years with gloom? Fate had endowed him with greater abilities than the majority of men; yet others seemed to get much farther than he with less effort, less merit! And in moments of discouragement he would imagine himself destined to die in poverty, perhaps of starvation, as that gypsy had indeed predicted back there in Andalusia in the days of his boyhood. Destiny? Fatality? There was Anacaona, the beautiful Queen Gold Flower! How rapidly she had flitted through his life! His love for her had been a matter of a few short hours—interesting hours, however, even if they were now but a hazy memory. Well, it had been his humiliating lot to see that adorable body which he had pressed in his arms dragged off to a gibbet, without his being able to do a thing to save it!

Whenever Don Alonso indulged in such confidences, Lucero would assume the motherly air of a matron living



above and apart from the tumults of youthful passions. She had put love behind her, she had! Her happiness was to devote herself entirely to her home!

"Don't worry about such things, Don Alonso!" she would say. "Go over there to Veragua, and with God's help pick up the gold they say is lying loose on the ground! Then when you get back to Spain you will find the great ladies all trooping after you and quarreling for the honor of offering you their hands. Take the Boy Admiral, for example! He was just the son of Don Cristobal, when we came here to the island. Well, here he is married to Doña Maria, a girl of the royal family!"

But for all of her self-reliance as a hard-working pioneer, straightforward in speech, prudent and loyal in her marital affections, Lucero was conscious of a growing uneasiness within her. She began to wish that Don Alonso would be less assiduous in his visits. There was something about his eyes that worried her. She knew how violent and aggressive those rough hidalgos could be, once they set their hearts upon a woman. With feminine insight she was becoming more and more aware of the coils a will as strong as hers was trying to wind about her.

Ojeda was talking less and less in his visits now. There were long periods of silence which she judged fraught with menace. The hero would sit with lowered eyes as though fighting a great battle within himself, measuring his scruples against his appetites. He was furthermore appearing at unexpected hours, perhaps in hopes of finding her entirely alone. She surely felt more tranquil when her son was about the house; but Alonsico had become interested in the cross-bow and was now



going out into the woods every day with a neighbor to hunt parrots and monkeys, and get practice with the weapon his father had left him. For a moment Lucero suspected there might have been an understanding between the neighbor in question and Don Alonso; but since the boy was inclined to disobey her when she asked him to abandon his expeditions abroad, she resigned herself to facing the danger alone. Instinct told her that the shade of the trees, the view out over the river to the distant sea, the singing of the birds, the rustling of the foliage, were somehow favorable to the evil inclinations of the hidalgo. She tried to avoid meeting him at places on the farm at all distant from the house. Whenever she could she made him sit in a chair near the door of her living room. There, as he raised his head, his eyes would fall upon the Crucifix nailed to the wall, and upon the sword, the buckler, and the other weapons of her absent husband. Such objects, she thought, would tend to divert the chevalier from his besetting notions.

Nevertheless, the thing she had been fearing, doubting at the same time that it would ever occur, came upon her one afternoon with brutal suddenness, like the violent shock of two bodies locking in a combat neither had foreseen. They had been standing in the garden, talking—in Don Alonso's voice a tone of desperation. It had just come over him: he had always loved Lucero, from the time she had boarded his ship in the Port of Cadiz, from the time of the siege at Fort Saint Thomas when he had gone without his food that she might eat! In those days, now so distant, he had affected an indifference he did not really feel, trying to think of her as some courageous, adventurous boy he had a right to admire. Alonsico,

besides, was not yet born—the fact of Lucero's approaching motherhood compelled respect! But it was love all the time, all the time! That he could see clearly now! The one woman in the world worthy of a man like him! She had the courage and the strength to follow him in his dangerous career! She had a spirit and a body like his own! Love between them would have the harsh, frenzied joy of an encounter between two mighty forces, each master of the other!

And in an instant he was upon her, his eyes ablaze with aggressive desire, his limbs trembling with passion.

But Lucero avoided the onrush and ran into the house, her eyes flashing anger, her voice taking on the shrill penetrating quality it had showed in battle at her husband's side against masses of armed savages.

"What a villainy!" she cried. "What does Your Grace mean? Has Your Grace turned Indian?"

And she reached for the stand of arms that was fixed to the wall and jerked the sword from its scabbard so violently that Fernando's armor and weapons came tumbling to the floor with a great crash. That she might kill Ojeda in the blindness of her rage did not matter to her. She might even have intended that very thing! At any rate, she lunged forward with the sword, till its point rested on the very breast of the man who was pursuing her.

They stood in that posture for a second, perhaps. Anger seemed to have made her taller. A vague sense of physical superiority lurked in the contempt she felt for this *hidalgo* suddenly gone wild, who was such a little man, and whom a mere show of her power had been enough to tame!

But the well-known speed of "Don Alonso of the Winged Feet" changed the situation in a flash. All at once he seemed to vanish from in front of her, and a grip of steel fell upon her right wrist, shaking the sword from her grasp before she was aware of it; and she felt herself drawn into a circle of two nervous, powerful arms that were wrapped about her as hard and as elastic as tempered steel. She struggled desperately to release herself, her very sense of helplessness, her very rage at finding him stronger than she, adding fury to her effort. He tried to press a kiss upon her lips. She responded by biting at his face with her teeth; though the pain seemed only to increase the vigor of his attack. Now she was off her feet. He was whirling her round and round, like some Indian warrior he might have been wrestling in hand-to-hand combat. Surely he had it in his power at any moment to let her fall to the ground!

And then Lucero called! It was a cry of helplessness, futile as she well realized. No one could hear her! Her Indians were far away at work on the farm. Her two native maids had gone out to do the family wash in a brook near by. It was an instinctive cry, born of a despairing sense that against such a foe her voice was her only defence at that moment. Why did she call, just then, for Juan de la Cosa, for her husband, Fernando, well knowing they were thousands of leagues away in Spain? She could not have said! Yet, at the sound of those two names, which she kept calling, the powerful arms that were knotted about her and held her pinioned seemed to loosen their clasp, and the weight of the masculine form that was bearing her down grew lighter. With a violent effort she was free! Able at last to speak, she said:

“And Your Grace pretends to be a chevalier! My husband is far away in Spain, working for you—a man who has always been ready to lay down his life to help you! And you come to his house and try to steal his wife by force! You say your Virgin protects you! What would She think of what you are doing now?”

They stood facing each other, a few steps apart. Ojeda's hands had fallen to his sides. His head had drooped upon his breast, and he stood gazing at the floor.

A thin stream of blood was trickling from the mark of Lucero's teeth on his cheek.

The names of his absent friends, the reference to the Virgin to whose service he had vowed himself as a knight, had been enough to awaken him to a shame-faced perception of his guilt. He was now like a drunken man suddenly recovered from the influence of a drug. So pitiable the expression on his face, that Lucero softened! When she spoke it was in a kindlier tone:

“Now please go, Don Alonso! Fortunately, we were alone! For my part, I shall forget that this ever happened! Promise that you will too!”

The Knight of the Virgin walked slowly toward the door. But there suddenly he turned, and strode back in her direction as though about to repeat his aggression. Sensing his real thought Lucero did not stir. She was not even frightened. And in fact Don Alonso bowed low before her, resting a knee on the ground as he reached for her hand. Three times he kissed the backs of her fingers, wetting them with the blood that was dripping down his cheek and with the tears that were falling from his eyes. He did not speak, but Lucero understood his

meaning as clearly as though it had been uttered in words!

“Thank you! Thank you!”

The intrepid hidalgo, so vehement and yet so changing in his moods, was thanking her for the resistance she had offered and for calling the two names. She had saved him from a cowardly wrong against his dearest brother in arms; and from a crime that would have estranged him from his Virgin!

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHALLENGE

The two little fleets dropped anchor in Santo Domingo almost at the same time.

First to arrive was Captain Juan de la Cosa with two ordinary caravels bought in Portugal—and he had been lucky to get as many as two with the very moderate means at his disposal. So far he had been the only man of money willing to risk his substance in such a hazardous adventure.

“My purse,” said the honest sailor, “isn’t what you would call fat; but so far as I can judge it is fatter than the purse of my friend and partner, Don Alonso de Ojeda!”

For a time the Knight of the Virgin could not conceal his disappointment. His two emissaries had returned with nothing but a royal charter to show for their trouble! But shortly he reflected that he had started out on other expeditions with even less to go on. He recovered his spirits and accepted with real enthusiasm the command of what he was already calling “my squadron.”

Two hundred men had enrolled at Lisbon for the expedition, all aglow from stories of the miraculous lands of Veragua which were at last beginning to spread through the ports of the Peninsula. Two hundred of



them, strangers to life in the colony, accustomed as yet neither to its foods nor its tribulations, but courageous fellows withal, experienced with wars of the Old World, and welcome therefore as brothers-in-arms to their future "Admiral." Such novices would be a valuable addition to the group of veterans already on hand in the colony, Cortés and Pizarro among these.

Don Alonso's jaw dropped again when Fernando and the Captain told the results of their negotiations and the trouble they had had with Don Diego de Nicuesa, a nobleman of wealthy family with many powerful friends, and sponsored by one of the King's uncles who had trained him in his service.

His Highness, Don Ferdinand, had found himself confronted with two proposals each favored by powerful patronage, and he had escaped from the dilemma by a simple device: he would grant both petitions, and divide between the rival captains the mainland which had been almost contemporaneously explored by Bastidas, Don Cristobal, and Juan de la Cosa! The respective heads of the two expeditions he showered with titles, honors, powers; but he gave not a vessel and not a cent. His royal favor was limited to a bundle of appointments and credentials!

The mainland to either side of Darien (the Isthmus of Panama) he divided into two provinces, the boundary between them bisecting the so-called Gulf of Urabá. The lands eastward to the Cabo de Vela he bestowed upon his faithful liegeman Don Alonso de Ojeda, with title as Governor of "New Andalusia" (the Colombia of later times). Ojeda's competitor, Don Diego de Nicuesa, became Governor of Castile the Golden (Panama, Costa

Rica, Honduras), the region which Columbus had embraced under the general name of Veragua. The two governors were each required to build two forts in their districts and would enjoy over a period of ten years the total produce of any mines they should discover.

Ojeda's discouragement was all the greater on perceiving that Veragua, the famous Veragua, had really fallen to Nicuesa! But Juan de la Cosa, the discoverer of Urabá and the first explorer of the beautiful coasts of New Andalusia, had made money in those territories. He bade the commander be of good cheer. He would find his province as rich in gold as Veragua! For that matter, Don Alonso's spirits were subject to ups and downs: he passed easily from despair to exhilaration. In case his own assignment did not come up to expectations, couldn't he, as a last resort, invade the province of his rival and annex it to his own?

But he was to have still a third shock, fraught with a deeper and more enduring bitterness. Hardly had the wake of his two caravels cleared, when Nicuesa's fleet came sailing into port. Six vessels, instead of two! Four full-riggers and two brigantines, all provisioned with abundant supplies and with an equipment for a voyage of discovery that would make your mouth water! To begin with, Nicuesa had succeeded in enlisting a much larger company in Spain than Ojeda's envoys. But then, look at the man's luck! While Juan de la Cosa was sailing his two caravels direct to Santo Domingo, Nicuesa had stopped among the islands in the Leeward Archipelago and captured some five score Caribs. These he could sell on the market at Hispaniola at top prices. Caribs made better slaves than the indolent natives of Haiti!

The Knight of the Virgin could only bite his lips at the differing aspects the two fleets offered. Not only were Nicuesa's boats more impressive in number. They were beauties every one of them! There they sat, riding jauntily under the admiring eyes of the Santo Domingans! His own puny caravels could not stand comparison with the cheapest of the neighboring vessels! And Don Alonso soon observed that others saw what he could see! Of the adventurers loitering about the "Four Corners" the loudest talkers and the most unruly of the lot were deserting him for the Governor of Castile the Golden. Nicuesa had ready money and could pay his men considerable advances!

And yet the better elements in the colony were standing faithful to Don Alonso de Ojeda. Francisco Pizarro was greeting the Governor of New Andalusia with the same rude but hearty loyalty:

"Don't forget, Your Grace! I am your man, and I will follow you, like Cortés, to the Mainland or to Hell!"

Genial Hernando himself did not think it necessary to give any new assurances. He had always been a friend of the Knight of the Virgin. With the Knight of the Virgin therefore he would go!

When the figures were all in, about one hundred of the hangers-on about the capital of Hispaniola had preferred the reputation of Ojeda to the influence and the money of Don Diego de Nicuesa. Don Alonso could even go so far as to refuse enlistments from men he did not like! During his last residence in Spain, Juan de la Cosa had been named Lord High Sheriff and Lieutenant-Governor of New Andalusia; but despite such exalted title he could not persuade his friend Ojeda to accept one

of his comrades from the old expedition of Bastidas. The man in question was known about the "Four Corners" as "the Fencing Master," whether from his skill with the sword or perhaps from his having taught the art of self-defense at some period in his hazardous career. His real name was Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, and he hailed from Jerez de los Caballeros in the province of Extremadura. When the vessels of the Bastidas fleet foundered off Hispaniola and the crews divided to march the seventy leagues that lay between them and the capital, Balboa had joined the group commanded by Juan de la Cosa. That observing pilot had learned to appreciate the man's resourcefulness in emergency, along with a rare gift for keeping up the spirits of a company by a certain heroic good-humor.

Balboa, however, had not gone back to Spain with the three famous money chests. He settled in Santo Domingo and turned to agriculture; for this man-at-arms, so distinguished in military adventure, nevertheless felt all the lure of the virgin lands about him and hankered for the thrill of triumph that came to the pioneers who first brought the wild nature of the New World under the mastery of man. However, his enterprises as a farmer had not proved more profitable than his escapades as soldier and mariner. Hurricanes had come more frequently in just those years and time after time destroyed the harvests which Balboa had hopefully nurtured on little properties he held at a settlement called Salvatierra. It was his misfortune also to experiment with European seeds that were to prove unacclimatable in Haiti. He was heavily in debt. His creditors were pursuing him relentlessly. Discouraged at last in his struggle with the

land, he was thinking of adventures in discovery again. Preferring a leader of tried achievement to a captain merely of wealth, he was more inclined toward New Andalusia than toward Castile the Golden.

But Ojeda shook his head at Balboa's name. He had met the gentleman at the "Four Corners" on several occasions when Balboa had come in to town from Salvatierra to renew contact with former comrades. Balboa had the sincerest admiration for the captor of Caonabo; but Ojeda did not respond to such advances. He sensed in the "Fencing Master" a character very like his own. In any place where they should chance to be together each of them would be first, or die.

"Your recruit is not of my liking," said Don Alonso to the master-pilot in a tone that precluded argument. "I do not choose to have men of that stamp in my company."

And there was no further talk of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa.

However, Ojeda's principal concern at the moment was money. To keep his rivals from laughing at him he needed to pretend he had plenty of it. At the same time he had to admit the opposite in order to procure it: unless he found some new resource, his expedition would never sail! He had all along kept Martin Fernandez de Enciso in mind for just such an emergency; and he now went straight to the lawyer and proposed a new partnership in the expedition. Enciso would contribute two thousand castillians gold. In exchange, he would receive a share in the product of all mines and, by virtue of the power of appointment conferred upon Ojeda by



the King, become "Lord High Justice of New Andalusia."

The barrister had spent most of his life about the law courts, and held judges in wholesome regard. The prospect of becoming chief justice of a continent where a whole population of whites and natives would be subject to his rulings immensely flattered him. But after all, there was the adventure itself, this direct exploration of virgin lands where he could study new seas and new peoples never before visited by Europeans. A man with a scientist's curiosity as devoted to learning as he was to romance, Martin Fernandez de Enciso was to return to Spain years later and publish the first "Geography of America," and likewise a first "Treatise on Navigation," dealing with the ocean routes connecting the two Worlds.

Even when Enciso had accepted partnership with Ojeda and Juan de la Cosa and had entrusted to them every cent he had earned at law, Don Alonso felt ill at ease at the superior position of Nicuesa; and since both were proud, restless, aggressive men, they found plenty of occasion for quarreling over interpretations of the privileges granted by the King in a single patent covering both their governorships.

Cuevas expected that hostilities would open almost any day between these two captains who had been fast friends in their youth.

"Men of their breed," he said, "especially when they are rivals, cannot live long together in a town as small as Santo Domingo without coming to blows."

The King had given them the Island of Jamaica to use in common as a base of operations. But each de-



manded more than half the island for his exclusive use. In the circumstances geographical indications were necessarily vague. Each thought the whole of Darien should be included in his respective domain.

Nicuesa had been reared as a courtier and knew all the arts of polite debate. Sagacious, ceremonious, always master of the violence that lay deeper in his nature, he conducted the discussions in such a way as to leave Ojeda perplexed by his arguments and even a little ridiculous in the eyes of onlookers. Don Alonso saw in advance that he would be no match for his antagonist on the latter's ground. Confident that he was more deft with the sword than with his tongue, he decided the disputes might best be settled by engaging Nicuesa in mortal combat.

He went to Fernando Cuevas and Francisco Pizarro and requested them to convey his challenge to the Governor of Castile the Golden:

"We had better kill each other and have done with it!" he said to his envoys. "Then the one who wins can take everything!"

He cautioned them, however, before they left, by all means not to inform Señor Juan de la Cosa of what was going on. That reasonable, conciliatory pilot of the deep seas was always finding right on both sides. He was disinclined to harsh measures when some peaceful solution for a difficulty could be found.

Don Diego de Nicuesa could not contain his surprise at the unexpected proposal of his rival. He was every bit as courageous as Ojeda, but he had a clearer conception of proprieties in word and deed. In this preposterous suggestion of a duel, he could detect the full

extent of his adversary's helpless rage. Inwardly amused, he proclaimed abroad that he was perfectly willing to meet Ojeda on the field of honor, provided there was some definite stake to fight for: each should post a forfeit of five thousand castillians gold, to become the property of the one who should survive the duel. By this time the majority of the ne'er-do-wells about the "Four Corners" in Santo Domingo had turned toward the better organized of the two expeditions. They agreed that Nicuesa was right.

The proposal of the forfeit proved, as Nicuesa had expected, a crushing blow for his high-handed antagonist. Five thousand gold castillians amounted at the time to something like twenty-five thousand modern dollars—a respectable sum of money in any day and age. Ojeda, had scarcely a cent to his name. Too proud to confess his poverty, he was at a loss for an answer to make. But he cut the Gordian knot in characteristic manner:

"So he's afraid to fight!" he said to Pizarro and Cuevas. "Well, I'll pay him a call and slap his face a few times: then we'll see whether the coward decides to draw his sword!"

By this time, Juan de la Cosa had got wind of the affair. When occasion demanded, this tough old sea-dog could fight as courageously and as stubbornly as anyone; but experience with the world had seasoned his less temperate passions: he thought it wiser to mediate between the two excited governors. With many visits back and forth he finally persuaded them to agree that the River Darién (also called the Rio Atrato), should mark the boundary of their respective empires.

The matter of Jamaica he could not settle so easily.

The Boy Admiral, Don Diego Colon, had decided to take a hand in the arrangements between these two protégés of the royal house. He was angry to begin with that the King had made any distribution of the lands of Veragua at all. These belonged to his family in accord with the rights and privileges he had inherited from the late Admiral! The Contract of Santa Fé talked a plain language: No one except Don Cristobal Colón, his heirs and assigns, had a right to make discoveries along the western route to Asia! If, accordingly, Ferdinand the Catholic desired to explore the Mainland he should have given the commission to the Viceroy's uncle, Don Bartholomew Colon. Don Bartholomew had been out to the westward! He had even tried to found a colony at Belén, during the late Admiral's Fourth Voyage!

In awarding the patents to Ojeda and Nicuesa the King's real intention was to be rid of the whole tribe of the Colons. He could allege that the Old Admiral had violated the Contract of Santa Fé by trying to establish an independent régime in Santo Domingo with the help of the Genoese Republic. The King, furthermore, had another more powerful argument of a controversial nature. The expeditions of the Colons so far had been at the expense of the Royal Exchequer and these disbursements had never been made good by the other parties to the contract. It was only fair that Ferdinand the Catholic, short of money through his wars in Naples and on the French frontier, should be free to accord charters and prerogatives to captains and sailors willing and ready to make explorations at their own expense.

Concluding that a bird in the hand was worth two in

the bush, Don Diego sought to simplify matters for the two contenders by taking possession of the Island of Jamaica himself, justifying his conduct meantime in a letter addressed to the King of Spain. In protest against the provisions of the charter granted to Ojeda and Nicuesa, he sent Captain Juan de Esquivel to occupy Jamaica with a force of seventy men and to hold it at the disposition of the Government of Santo Domingo. This decisive action was hastened by Don Diego's estimate of Ojeda. He feared the impetuosity of that wrathful hidalgo much more than Nicuesa's diplomacy. Eager to be free of Don Alonso at the earliest possible moment, he furnished every possible facility for the early departure of the smaller of the two squadrons. As the event proved, Ojeda was to learn of the seizure of Jamaica only at the moment of his departure.

Juan de la Cosa had bought two small brigantines in the harbor at Santo Domingo, to supplement the two caravels which had come on from the Peninsula. When the rolls of the company were closed the crews numbered altogether some three hundred men. Among them was Francisco Pizarro. Actually one of Don Alonso's chief lieutenants, he had no fixed assignment on the register, accompanying the Governor simply as a personal friend. Hernan Cortés had to withdraw. While out hunting in the mountains a few weeks earlier, he had slipped on a rolling stone and dislocated a knee. At the moment he was unable to stir from his bed. He promised, however, to join the expedition when the relief party, which lawyer Enciso was to organize in the capital, should set sail.

The idea of "scaling" the expedition belonged to Juan

de la Cosa. That prudent captain thought it wiser to provide for fresh supplies and reinforcements when an establishment had already been made on some favorable site along the Gulf of Urabá.

This failure of Cortés to sail with Ojeda is one of the little curiosities in the early history of the Conquest. Had he left Santo Domingo with Don Alonso's fleet and managed to come off alive, he would probably, like Pizarro, have spent long years on Panama. In that case the Conquest of Mexico might either have been postponed indefinitely, or else have fallen to some other captain. A boulder rolling on a hillside in Haiti may have had its effect on the whole course of later American history!

Lucero suddenly found herself a very important person, now that so many men were to leave the Island. As one of the earliest residents on Hispaniola, it devolved principally upon her to look after the families that stayed behind. The wife and daughters of Juan de la Cosa, who had come on to the New World, turned to her for aid and advice. Don Alonso's Isabel sent her children to the Cuevas farm that Lucero might care for them. The Indian woman herself was to follow her husband on the perilous search for gold on the coasts of the mainland to the West.

The Governor of New Andalusia was just boarding his vessel at the Wooden Wharf when he learned that the Boy Admiral had deprived him and Nicuesa of control at Jamaica. The news threw him into a towering rage. Paying his respects to the Viceroy and his government in a loud voice he promised to go to Jamaica and take possession of the place the moment he had attended to



the more urgent affairs of his own territory. Leaning back over the rail of his caravel and holding up his right hand in solemn oath he cried:

"I swear by my Virgin that once I get to Jamaica and lay my hands on Captain Juan de Esquivel, I will cut off his head!"

And those who heard him did not doubt that the irate soldier would do exactly as he said.

However the little squadron cast off its moorings and made all sail westward under command of Captain Juan de la Cosa.

Nicuesa did not get off for some days yet. The Governor of Castile the Golden felt more at his ease now that his rival was no longer on the scene. Then again, the fact that the marvelous Veragua had fallen to him in the division of the future spoils had attracted the far larger company to his colors. Nicuesa had so many men available that to accommodate them a seventh boat was absolutely necessary. Rich as he was, Nicuesa was quite as generous, quite as much the spendthrift, as his rival Don Alonso de Ojeda. At the moment he was up to his eyes in debt. The Boy Admiral had been at no pains to conceal the ill-will he felt towards Nicuesa's enterprise, and the young man's creditors had come to think they could gain favor with the Viceroy by making it as difficult for him as possible. They all insisted on having their money before he cleared the port.

Nicuesa's soldiers were embarking, more than seven hundred men, all carefully selected, all well armed. He had also taken a number of mares aboard after sending them to stud, as Ojeda too had done—of all the live



stock from Europe horses seemed to take best to conditions in the New World.

Nicuesa had selected Lope de Olano as his second in command. This was a most unfortunate choice. Olano had already shown himself one of the most treacherous and quarrelsome of men during the many troubles that had beset Hispaniola in the Old Admiral's time.

One by one the vessels of Nicuesa's fleet dropped down stream to the mouth of the Ocema; and thence they put to sea. The last of them however halted at the harbor mouth to wait for the Governor himself. Nicuesa would come aboard as soon as he had settled certain difficulties in town.

Don Diego Colon had stealthily made trouble through understandings with Nicuesa's creditors. The Governor of Castile the Golden was just stepping aboard his flagship when he was seized by a party of constables. Haled straightway before the Chief Justice, he was confronted by a resident of Santo Domingo who demanded immediate payment of a loan of five hundred ducats. The Court ruled that he must pay the sum or else go to jail.

Vainly the unhappy knight protested that there was no point in such urgency, that an effort was being made to ruin him, that the action of the court in preventing him from joining his expedition was interfering with the King's service. The judge stolidly held his ground, knowing well that he was pleasing the Viceroy mightily. Fortunately for Nicuesa, an obscure lawyer, whose name has been lost to history, proved more public spirited than the high magistrate of Santo Domingo. The man was much moved at Nicuesa's well-justified despair. Rising before the court he said:

"I cannot allow such a perfect gentleman as Don Diego de Nicuesa to be treated in this manner! I will pay his debt!"

The Governor of Castile the Golden looked around in surprise, hardly able to believe his ears. But the young barrister had left the court room to return in a few moments with a purse filled with gold.

On obtaining his freedom Nicuesa threw his arms about his unexpected savior promising to repay this unsecured loan with ample interest. Was he not going off to the wonderful Veragua, the Golden Chersonese of the Ancients? He would give this friend of the hour of need more gold than was ever dreamed of!

And he hurried away to his flagship to reach the open sea.

Otherwise the Boy Admiral might find another creditor to delay the conquest of Veragua, and save the gold of King Solomon for the Colons!

## CHAPTER VI

### THE AMBUSCADE

A few days' sail brought Ojeda's armadilla off the Gulf of Urabá. There it made shelter in the natural harbor about which in later years the city of Cartagena was destined to rise.

These were familiar waters to Juan de la Cosa. He had entered that harbor eight years before on the voyage with Rodrigo de Bastidas. His first care now was to warn the Commander not to be too careless of the natives of the region. They were a different sort of people from the peaceful indolent Indians the Spaniards knew on the Antillian isles.

"They seem to be of Carib stock—and how they fight!" he said. "They use a kind of long sword they make out of palm, and shields made of leather stretched over willow frames. They dip their arrows in a very subtle poison that kills a man in a few hours. The women are as dangerous as the men. They fight side by side with them in battle, and are just as good marksmen with the bow or at throwing the spear."

The sharp-eyed mariner also perceived that the Indians along the coast were in very bad humor at that particular moment. He did not know their hostility was due to raids by other whites who had lately passed that way. The natives flew to arms the moment Ojeda's ex-

pedition appeared in the offing. The Captain advised Ojeda to abandon the idea of building a fort at just that point and select a site farther along inside the gulf where the Indians might not be so fierce and did not use poisoned weapons. But the Knight of the Virgin could not see why he should change his plans to suit the whims of a few naked Indians. Besides, it was important to get a cargo of slaves to Hispaniola at the earliest possible moment. His creditors there would be wanting their money! The policies of the Viceroy had saved him from irritations such as Nicuesa met with on his departure. But Ojeda knew that Lawyer Enciso would never be allowed to sail unless he himself had covered the notes he had given in preparing for his own expedition.

So Don Alonso went ashore with all his men-at-arms, leaving aboard ship only the sailors proper. Juan de la Cosa did not consider himself a military man but he could not think of separating from his partner and captain whom he had come to love with a truly paternal affection. He also disembarked to help where he could.

As Cuevas walked ashore through the surf at his commander's side he saw great crowds of natives drawn up at the edge of the woods—Indians painted red and black and much fiercer of aspect than those on Hispaniola. Arrayed in compact masses behind fibre shields, armed with long wooden swords such as the pilot had described, and little spears pointed with fish spines, they stood gazing in silent hostility at these extraordinary white men in shiny helmets and glittering corselets. But keeping their distance, they showed no signs of fear; nor did they give ground as the main body of Spaniards came forward. It was an attitude rather of ominous self-con-

fidant defiance. They were waiting to see what would happen.

And what happened was a curious thing, indeed! With the expedition had come three friars, to harangue the infidels of New Andalusia and instruct them in the Christian Faith. At Ojeda's command one of them advanced, with a piece of parchment in his hand—a proclamation of conquest in the name of the King of Spain!

The document in question was a ponderous affair, recently devised by lawyers prominent at the Court in Spain with the help of a number of bishops and monks not less influential. These worthy jurists and clerics had tender consciences. The wild naked savages whom the Spanish Discoverers were finding in the Western Ocean were a poor people unillumined by any real religion; but they were living on the soil of their ancestors, and it was not just to subject them to a foreign authority without some explanation of the legal bases of the occupation and some demonstration of the unquestioned right the Spaniards had to impose the True Faith upon them. With no conception whatever of conditions actually prevailing in these new lands, hardly aware indeed of their enormous distances from Europe, the doctors had drawn up a long and carefully worded brief. All explorers were required by law to read it to the peoples whose lands were being seized; and they were furthermore forbidden to join battle without such preliminary service of notice!

Don Alonso, for his part, was as respectful of religious observances as he was violent in physical action. He stepped boldly forward toward the Indian army, keeping his sword in sheath as a sign of peaceful intent.

Behind him walked the friars; then Juan de la Cosa, increasingly perturbed at the commander's lack of caution; then Fernando Cuevas, keenly interested in the scene before him; and finally Pizarro, with a group of soldiers whom, prudently and distrustfully, he had ordered to draw their arms.

"The proclamation, Father!" called Ojeda to the friar with the scroll.

And the monk's voice began to resound in that menacing silence, delivering a long allocution of Spanish jurists and theologians with great care and great distinctness, so that the Indians would not have missed a syllable had the God of the Christians blessed them with the ability to understand a word.

"Greetings in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost and of the Blessed Virgin, Amen. Their Highnesses, Sovereigns of Castile and Leon, conquerors of barbarians, great, mighty, powerful, through me, Alonso de Ojeda, their servant, messenger, captain, hereby make known to you and inform you so far as within me lies, that God Our Lord, the one true and eternal God, created Heaven and Earth and also the First Man and the First Woman whereof ye and we are descended. . . ."

And the script went on to expound the fundamental dogmas of the Catholic Faith, affirming the supreme power of Saint Peter and of his successors, the Popes, over all mankind; the donation which the Roman Pontiff had made to the Kings of Spain of all regions of the New World, their lands and inhabitants; enjoining such as should hear the reading to be forthwith instructed in the truths of the Christian religion and to recognize



the supremacy of the Pope and the sovereignty of His Catholic Highness, and threatening all who should refuse to obey with the horrors of war, the destruction of homes and fields, the slavery of wives and children. . . .

The friar was taking his task very seriously. Cuevas, who understood about as well as the savages, was beginning to find the ceremony rather long—he could, to be sure, amuse himself by looking at the masses of strange people drawn up before him some hundred feet away.

The Indians, for their part, seemed much impressed. This was evidently some magical incantation—what would come of it? The interior of the woods was echoing with distant alarums. But as new groups of savages came out to the shore and saw the Spanish company they fell silent like the rest of their comrades and stood looking on in wonderment. But the medicine man with the long black robe and the close shaven scalp continued talking, with that white thing in front of his eyes. As loud whoops within the forest would sometimes drown his voice, the friar would stop and look up with the hurt expression of a preacher whose sermon has been interrupted by an ill-mannered congregation.

“Continue, Your Reverence!” the Governor would order.

“For all they understand!” cursed Juan de la Cosa between his teeth.

Cuevas began to see that the tension was too great, that all this could not last much longer. Instinctively his hand sought the pommel of his sword. The friar, indeed, was again interrupted, this time by a flying stone that caught the edge of his parchment and folded it over in his hand. And instantly spears and arrows came out in

volleys from the woods and stuck quivering in the sand about the commander and his companions.

"You need not continue, Father!" cried the Governor angrily.

But the whole forest in front of them seemed suddenly to break into pandemonium—it was one great crash of screeching conch shells and whooping Indians. The brown-skinned army was rushing forward to the attack!

Instantly Ojeda was transformed with that thrill of blood-seeking voluptuousness that always came over him when he entered combat. From his belt dangled the little picture of the Virgin which he had been careful to put on as he came ashore. He gave the image a rapid glance which was the equivalent of a prayer, and raised his war cry:

"Santiago! Santiago! Give it to them!"

And crouching behind his shield but with inimitable speed he dashed upon the Indians with upraised sword far in advance of his men, eager to take the brunt of the onslaught alone. But the old captain, Juan de la Cosa, came panting on behind, equally courageous in a battle he would have preferred to avoid. But Pizarro's men were upon the savages in a second. They charged furiously, slashing tremendous blows to right and left with their swords, cutting the Indians down by scores, trampling them under foot, and finally driving them into the forest in disordered rout. In a few moments the white sand of the beach was stained red with blood from the fallen foe, while other Indians cut off from their fleeing comrades were huddling in groups as prisoners. On the bodies of living and dead alike the Spaniards found plaques of gold, though the metal was of poor quality.

In the flush of this easy triumph Ojeda was for plunging inland at once, forcing prisoners to guide him to the Indian towns. Juan de la Cosa advised against this. It was clear these Indians were courageous men able to make a good fight even with inferior weapons. To meet them in the wilderness on ground which they only knew would involve terrible risks. But the words fell on the empty air. The Governor of New Andalusia was already deep in his new dominions; and the loyal pilot could do nothing but follow after, sword in hand, though he felt the company was marching to certain death.

They had advanced a long distance into the forest when they came to a clearing with numerous huts. There another army of natives with shields, swords, spears, bows and arrows, were awaiting them. Again Don Alonso raised his war cry and again the Spaniards charged, driving the natives before them in rout after a first bloody shock had made many victims. Eight Indian braves, however, refused to give ground. They took refuge in a long-house and like heroes of the old epics elected death in preference to turning their backs before such a powerful enemy. They were skilful archers all, and since their arrows were dipped in "hierba" the Spaniards dared not approach too close to the miserable hut.

Finally Ojeda lost patience:

"Shame! Shame! You are afraid of eight naked savages?"

Piqued at the insult, a Spanish veteran made a dash for the building to break down the door. An Indian shaft pierced him through and through, and stretched him dead on the ground. The building was made of poles

interwoven with dried grasses. Don Alonso saw it could be reduced by fire. Torches of dry wood were prepared and hurled from a distance at the roof of the house. In a moment it was a mass of flames. The copper-skinned warriors did not flinch. They stayed to a man, and were roasted alive in the raging furnace.

Seventy prisoners altogether were taken in this fighting, all of them tall well-built men, hard of muscle, and patently adaptable to all kinds of work. Bringing excellent prices on the market at Santo Domingo they would surely lighten the financial burdens resting on the Lawyer Enciso. Since this human booty was a most precious treasure and had to be handled with great care, Don Alonso decided to send the prisoners aboard ship at once under guard of Pizarro and Fernando Cuevas. Ojeda's Indian squaw, Isabel, also returned to the beach with the throng of slaves. It was already a question of open war and her services as interpreter would no longer be necessary. Besides, she seemed for some reason to be in very low spirits, like a harmless animal sensing the presence of a danger.

After inspecting the captured cabins, Juan de la Cosa, ever present at Ojeda's side, urged an immediate retreat to the vessels. Night was coming on. He knew the habits of the Indians. They would take advantage of the darkness, reform their bands under shelter of the wilderness, and make a counter attack!

Far from being impressed with the argument, Don Alonso rather hoped for a new battle. It would be a chance to capture more slaves, and increase the collection of gold plaques even though the metal in them was not as good as it might be. The two encounters had not

lasted long enough really to tax his strength or appease his pugnacious instincts now thoroughly aroused. He did not stop to argue, but plunged on into the forest, continuing the pursuit of the routed natives.

It was dusk when they reached a village called Yurbaco by the guides. The huts, spread about in no apparent system, some of them built deep in the woods far removed from others, were completely deserted. The inhabitants had fled, taking all their valuables with them. Assuming that the Indians would be terrified after two such disastrous brushes with the whites, the Spaniards scattered at their leisure about the settlement to see what they could find.

That Juan de la Cosa's besetting fears were well grounded became suddenly apparent. The woods about the town seemed to come to life all at once and shudder with crashing horns and conch shells. A force of natives much larger than either of the two previously encountered was upon the Spaniards. Not only were Ojeda's men reduced in number through the dispatch of guards to the beach. They were scattered among the widely separated dwellings, some of them inside, others of them in the open, but unable in any event to form in line for a charge en masse. Indians gathered in dozens about each Spaniard. Others appeared in the tree-tops to shoot their poisoned arrows from above. This time the Spaniards were on the defensive and they knew they were fighting for their lives. They killed and killed; yet their enemies, confident now of victory, kept rushing forward with fresh courage over the bodies of their dead. No armor, however good, could withstand so many and such furious blows. Shields and corselets were soon dented



or broken by the spears and wooden swords. Clouds of arrows, their barbs wound with poisoned grass, were whizzing through the air in all directions.

Despite his blind self-confidence, Ojeda was one of the first to perceive the gravity of the situation. With his usual quickness of judgment he had managed to assemble a few men under the shelter of a stockade. The Indian arrows were rapidly reducing the number of his soldiers. If he himself had so far remained unhurt it was thanks to his agility and to his instinctive resourcefulness in battle. His slight stature offered a much smaller target to the Indian marksmen than the other Spaniards and he had made himself still smaller by getting down on his knees and covering himself almost entirely with his shield. So he went about from point to point, with marvelous speed in view of his crouching posture, cutting down every Indian that came within reach of his sword. But one by one his companions fell, some of them instantly killed, others writhing on the ground in the horrible convulsions induced by the "hierba." He was all alone when Juan de la Cosa came up with a few soldiers he had been able to bring together in a group. It was the part of the valorous pilot to stand by his comrade down to his last breath. He stationed himself at the entrance to the stockade and beat back all Indians, more courageous than their fellows, who dared approach. Juan de la Cosa was a strong man in spite of his years. In hand to hand encounter the Indians were no match for him. But the poisoned arrows were doing their deadly work. Most of his men were down. He himself was wounded in several places.

Don Alonso saw that his position could not be held,



that he had to break from it at any cost. Calling an explanation to Juan de la Cosa, he suddenly dashed out through the door of the stockade, hurling himself into the Indian masses, striking out with vicious clips of his sword, and with such fury and such lightness of foot that the Indians separated before him.

He was out of sight in an instant. Juan de la Cosa tried to follow but he was not as swift as his younger comrade and he was already weak from loss of blood. Unable to cut his path clear, he finally took refuge with the few survivors among the Spaniards in an Indian shack, knocking off the roof from the inside to prevent the enemy from setting it on fire.

There he managed to defend himself till well into the night, after all his companions, save one, had been killed.

What he could not resist was the poison in his numerous wounds. Little by little his strength ebbed away till his sword fell from his hands and he sank to the ground. Conscious that death was at hand, he called his lone companion to his side and whispered faintly:

"Brother, God has shielded you so far! You still have a chance! Run! Break through if you can! If you see Don Alonso again, tell him how I died!"

Of the seventy soldiers who had followed the Knight of the Virgin in his mad dash into the woods, this Spaniard was the only one to escape with his life. Crawling on hands and knees for the most part with long delays in hiding, when he heard Indians about, the man reached the shore late the following day, and found a company of Spaniards waiting there.

Cuevas and the others were stunned at the disaster. They had begun to worry when morning came and noth-

ing had been heard of the Commander and his men. Several parties had started inland to look for them, but they were obliged to retreat before the masses of savages revealed by the widespread calling and the alarums from conch shells and wooden horns. Trumpeters from the vessels kept sounding their bugles at the edge of the woods; but their signals were answered only by an ominous silence, or by whoops of triumph from the hidden Indians. Groups of sailors from the caravels were meantime running the coast in boats, firing their guns as they rowed along. But the shots died away in the unbroken calm of the forest, which, to the discouraged Spaniards, seemed to creep with death.

After hearing the story of the one survivor, it was taken for granted that Don Alonso had been killed. Undoubtedly he had fallen somewhere deep in the wilderness, stricken with "hierba" as Juan de la Cosa had been. Had the doughty commander been alive, it seemed impossible he would not somehow have made his way back to the ships.

His Indian Isabel was the only one who refused to believe him dead. She would follow the little parties along the coast or about the edges of the forest, her face stolid, impassive, betraying no emotion. Whenever the trumpeters would lay aside their bugles or the soldiers decide not to waste more powder, Isabel would utter a long piercing cry much like the whoops the savages were still exchanging in the brush. Her husband would know that call, she said. It was a cry she had learned as a child in her tribe. During Ojeda's second voyage she had used it many times to find him, when they chanced to be separated in the course of some exploration.

"If he alive, he know who calls," she would say to Cuevas, as he marched at her side.

But on the third day she repeated the cry less frequently. Instead she kept stopping from time to time and sniffing at the air as though she scented in it something that was serving her as a guide. At the time Cuevas had set out with the Indian woman and six Spaniards to make one last search. They had rounded a little cape along the shore, so that the four boats lay invisible behind them. It was a wild strip of coast, a deserted sea opening out before it.

"Ahí, Ahí!" the Indian woman suddenly cried, pointing to some shrubbery growing in a marsh.

It was a clump of mangroves—trees that live in water but keep their roots in contact with the air by stretching them out in great nets over the surfaces of their pools. Isabel dashed resolutely into the thicket, fearlessly trusting her weight to the treacherous footing, brushing the branches aside to open a passage before her. She was like a dog following a scent.

Soon she called, and it was a cry of triumph. Following her with their eyes, Cuevas and his companions could now see in the dark penumbra of the swamp as it were a corpse stretched at her feet between two mangroves, a corpse dressed in Spanish clothes, half reclining on a mat of floating vegetation in the position in which death had overtaken it. But no—and the Spaniards burst into one shout of astonishment and joy—the corpse was a living corpse! It was Don Alonso himself, alive, his shield still hanging from one shoulder, his sword in one hand, and the little picture of the Virgin dangling from his belt.

The hero opened his eyes as he felt Isabel's caresses on his cheeks and heard the voices of friends, but then he closed them again, unable to utter a word in the dire exhaustion to which hunger, exposure, and sustained exertion had reduced him.

Some of the men carried him tenderly to the beach, while others ran to collect dry wood for a great fire. It was important first of all to get him warm. His clothes were soaked with the cold water that had seeped through the moss on which he had been sleeping. As he lay near the fire, still drowsing, his friends were examining his shield. Nicks and dents from more than three hundred arrows could be counted on it.

After a time he awoke, and a little food and wine restored him still further. At last he was able to speak. Cuevas doubted whether he had ever felt such admiration for the courage and endurance of his commander, even at the time of Caonabo's capture.

"Any one else," he said with a gesture toward Don Alonso, "would have been dead days ago!"

On dashing out of the stockade and breaking through the cordon of savages, Ojeda's first care had been to turn inland, away from the sea. The Indians would not be looking for him in that direction! He held that course all that first night, thinking to begin a wide turn to the shore in the morning. But it was not easy to keep his bearings in the thick tropical foliage, which cut off a clear view of the stars. Nothing but the triumphant calling of the savages, who were celebrating their victory, was there to serve him as guide. He lay quiet in hiding all the next day, waiting for night to resume his tramp. He groped his way forward in the dark, all but plunging

over dangerous precipices several times. He had to cut much of his way through tangled underbrush. Monkeys and parrots in the trees over his head made great ado at the presence of this man who did not smell like a native of the country. Several times he stepped on great snakes which he had to kill with slashes from his sword. He grew so tired that more than once he thought he was about to die. To add to his despair, he kept thinking of his friend Juan de la Cosa whom he had led to death. How foolishly he had spurned the crafty pilot's advice! The one thing to sustain his iron will in his hopeless situation was the image of the Virgin hanging from his belt. Yes, he could depend on Her! Our Lady would save his life this time as She had done so often before!

Finally, he reached the sea. The shore, as far as he could see, was entirely deserted. There was no trace of his fleet on the water either. He had no means of knowing that the vessels he was looking for lay just out of sight, around the neighboring headland. Even if he had known, he doubted whether he could have gone another step. He had had no food for three days. His strength had entirely failed. His legs were doubling under him as though the earth were pulling at his body. In utter need of sleep, he had sought a bed in that clump of mangroves floating in the swamp. It was his instinctive cunning—he was too tired really to think! He believed the savages would be less likely to come upon him in that refuge.

As he lay down, it was with a feeling that the slumber now stealing upon him would be the long sleep of death. The water seeped through his clothing and chilled him to the bone. Things began to swirl before his eyes. But the



little consciousness he had he mustered in one last appeal to his Virgin! Strange that a memory of his distant youth should cling so tenaciously to his mind during this silent agony! He remembered the prophecy of the gipsy back in Spain who had looked at his hand and told him he would never fall in battle but would die somewhere of hunger. How often he had laughed at the absurdity of such a thing! He, an hidalgo, scion of an illustrious Spanish family, dying like a beggar in a street! Yet here was the prophecy coming true in ways of which he would never have dreamed!

"But My Virgin stayed by me!" he ended. "Once more She has saved my life and brought me safe and sound through this tremendous adventure!"

And as the Spaniards stood about listening, or looking at the marks on his shield, everyone of them a dent made by the barb of a poisoned arrow, they were willing to agree with him that the Mother of God had worked another miracle!

But a few moments later Fernando Cuevas was again reminded that life, as it is really lived, may be for the most part a monotonous series of humdrum events, with real adventures coming few and far between; but that nevertheless strange coincidences, unexpected encounters, do occur such as are to be found ordinarily only in story books.

He and his men were still gathered around their heroic captain at the fire, preparing more wine and more food to revive him, when the sky-line at the far edge of that blue plain of sea, so rarely traversed by the ships of Europeans, was suddenly dotted with sails. A fleet of vessels was coming along the coast, bearing down on the



little squadron of Don Alonso which lay at anchor around the promontory—hidden from view at the swamp, Ojeda's vessels would be quite visible to anyone off shore!

The sight of the sails seemed to put more life in Ojeda than the food and the wine had done. He recognized them at once! Of course! It was Nicuesa sailing out from Santo Domingo in pursuit of him! And he could not restrain his tears, tears of rage and humiliation! Why should he find himself disarmed at that critical juncture, wholly at the mercy of the man he had so bitterly insulted?

He thought of the challenge he had sent Nicuesa and of the many threats he had made against his former friend:

"He is looking for me," he said. "He wants to get even with me, and he has good reason for doing so . . . The trouble is, I am in no condition to defend myself!"

But straightway the craft of the born leader awakened in him at the call of danger: he ordered Cuevas to hurry back to the vessels with the other men and to leave him where he was on the shore without revealing to anyone, even to their most intimate friends, where he lay in hiding. He would stay there until Nicuesa went away again. Any parties of Indians that might stray upon him in this region of the shore he could attend to on his own account. If Nicuesa seemed disposed to linger very long, the squaw Isabel could get food to him secretly!

When the on-coming "armadilla" had dropped anchor in the shelter, Nicuesa's first act was to board Don Alonso's flagship to inquire as to the luck of the Governor of New Andalusia. Pizarro and others of Ojeda's comrades replied in the best of faith that they

did not know where Don Alonso was—in accord with the Commander's orders, Cuevas had not revealed the discovery just made in the swamp farther down the shore. They believed Ojeda had perished in the encounter which had brought death to seventy other members of the expedition.

Nicuesa shed tears of real sorrow at this unhappy fate of his old friend. But when Cuevas observed that the Governor of Castile the Golden seemed quite sincere, he called him aside. Would he give his word of honor not to attack Ojeda if the latter should be still alive, nor take advantage of his rival's condition to get even for the quarrels at Santo Domingo? A generous soldier and a true gentleman at bottom, Nicuesa felt insulted at the request:

"I beg Your Grace!" he said, "Go to your captain, if he be still alive, and bring him to me here! For I pledge my word not only to forget all that has taken place, but to help him, if I may, like a loyal brother-in-arms! I and my people will follow him wherever he leads till the slaughter of Señor Juan de la Cosa and your other comrades has been avenged."

In the face of such chivalry and the Christian gentleness with which Nicuesa opened his arms to embrace him, Don Alonso, still weak from hunger, still bruised and torn from his tramp through the woods, could only hang his head in silence. After all, the two rival captains were counterparts one of the other. And Cuevas thought he visioned in their conduct the strange duality present in all those men of iron who for the next fifty years were to keep setting out from Spain to conquer the New World. Among themselves they were unfailingly chival-

rous and generous. Fierce and merciless in the moment of rancor, they would become gentle as lambs at the moment of reconciliation—if perchance they had not killed each other! Their cruelties they kept most often for the Indian savages, a lower kind of humanity, unenlightened by “reason,” as Christians of the time thought, worthy at the most of consideration from a few pious priests of evangelical dispositions.

Two warriors such as Ojeda and Nicuesa could only regard vengeance on the enemy as an immediate obligation, and four hundred men-at-arms were at once set ashore along with a number of horse. Ojeda still remembered the route he had followed in making his rash advance into the wilderness some days before. That night was coming on mattered little—darkness would favor the surprise they were planning for the Indians! It was about midnight when the army reached the neighborhood of the little Indian village of Yurbaco, the scene of such tragic memories. In approaching their goal the Spaniards divided into two columns, and deployed to right and left, so as eventually to encircle the town and cut off any avenue of escape.

The natives so recently victorious were all asleep. With a carelessness rare in their race they had not taken the trouble even to post sentinels. Had they not killed the bravest of the white men? As for the others aboard the ships at sea, not one had ventured into the forest since the attack four days before! As the throng of Europeans advanced through the forest in the dark the birds and monkeys sleeping in the tree-tops raised a deafening hubbub. It made no difference. The Indians were not dreaming of any danger. If they awoke at all, they went

back to sleep again without moving from their hammocks.

But soon they were to leap to their feet to find their eyes dazzled by the glare of a vast conflagration. Their bohios and long-houses of grass and poles were all on fire. The copper-skinned warriors sprang to their arms, thinking they would rush forth to another triumph over enemies they had already beaten! But at the doors of their houses stood groups of vengeful white men, shining like gods of hell as the light from the fire glittered off their helmets and cuirasses. Such Indians as reached the open were cut to pieces. Those that clung to their houses were burned alive. And that too was the fate of the women and children. They had never seen those cruel white gods before; and the strange men-horses clothed in fire they regarded as monsters even more terrible than the men of steel. They all shrank back in terror, and perished in the flames.

The invaders had now no thought of taking prisoners to sell as slaves, nor did they give any quarter out of pity. They remembered only that seventy of their comrades had been slain. Their rage mounted to fury when at last they came upon the body of Juan de la Cosa tied naked to a tree and so swollen and blackened from the poison in his wounds that he was hardly recognizable. The braves of the tribe had been using him as a target after his death: dozens of arrows were still sticking in his flesh. As the Spaniards went about in search of valuables among the still smoking ruins of the village, they came upon the bodies of many others of their friends, likewise tied to trees and riddled with poisoned arrows. But such spectacles filled them with superstitious terror. This

was a deadly environment—they could not think of staying there very long! Even before the Indian houses had ceased burning the expedition was on its way back to the shore.

The two Governors of the Mainland bade each other farewell the following morning. Nicuesa had gained much booty from the night's adventure. His men had found hundreds of plaques and other precious objects in the Indian town they had ruined. If this was New Andalusia, what would his own domain be like? He was eager to resume his voyage at the earliest possible moment towards Veragua, the land of real wealth!

The two commanders embraced like brothers, on the strand—and they were never to meet again.

**PART III**

**THE SUNSET OF A HERO**





## CHAPTER I

### THE POISONED ARROW

Ojeda felt lost now that Juan de la Cosa was no longer with him. He could count on Francisco Pizarro for any fighting that might be necessary; and he had Fernando Cuevas as comrade and intimate friend. But nothing could replace the counsel and the experience of the wise, thoughtful and cheerful pilot. At any rate, Don Alonso thought he should follow his navigator's advice and not attempt a colony just there in that section of the Mainland where he had met only disaster; so he straightway laid his course westward toward the Gulf of Urabá to look for the River Darién. The natives described that region as abundant in gold; and Juan de la Cosa had selected it as the most desirable site for a colony. Besides, it was a strategic point: it marked the boundary between the territories of New Andalusia and Castile the Golden.

But now deprived of the seamanship of the celebrated pilot, Ojeda could not, somehow, find the mouth of the Darién and was obliged to disembark at one point or another along the shore, always in search of a favorable location for establishing his base. Each landing increased discouragement among his men, already depressed by the losses at Yurbaco. The country seemed fertile—it was exuberant at any rate in vegetation; but

it inspired fear in all its aspects. The wild life was as fierce as it was abundant. Panthers and tigers howled in the forests. Hardly a ledge or a thicket that did not vomit forth its great poisonous reptile. On an expedition up one of the streams a huge crocodile seized a war horse and dragged it to its death under water. The moment the Spaniards advanced inland out of sight of the ocean, they would fall into ambuscades laid for them by the Indians, and the advantages they had over the savages by virtue of their armor seemed gradually to be disappearing as such battles multiplied in number. All the Indians were fine marksmen "with the grass," that is to say with arrows dipped in a mortal poison; and their bows were so powerful that their shafts would sometimes penetrate both shield and cuirass. Only in the open field were the Spaniards certain of victory—thanks to Ojeda's audacity on the attack and the headlong fury with which his men followed him.

All the company were eager for rest and began clamoring for an early settlement at any point at all along the Gulf of Urabá. Yielding to the pressure, Ojeda finally selected a tract of high land on the eastern shore of the bight, and disembarked the tools and supplies from the two ships. Buildings began to rise in a town—the first founded on the Mainland after Don Cristobal's fruitless attempt at Belén. It received the name of San Sebastian.

"Since that holy martyr met his death from arrows," said Ojeda, "may his name protect us from the poisoned shafts of these heathen!"

The most important task was to build a block-house and a high palisade that would defend the little city.

After the disaster in which Juan de la Cosa had perished, the expedition was so reduced in power that Ojeda saw it would be difficult to hold out against populous Indian tribes that were beginning to take arms all along the shore. Supplies also were running low. It was important that Enciso should come on at the earliest possible moment with more men and munitions. Don Alonso decided therefore to send the captives taken at Yurbaco back to Santo Domingo at once.

He considered Cuevas the man best calculated to hasten the lawyer's arrival, but Fernando refused to accept:

"I should much prefer to remain with Your Grace," he said, "serving you as a soldier and not as a messenger."

The Governor put his Indian wife aboard the boat for Santo Domingo in spite of her complaints. The fierce natives along the shore refused to receive heralds, and he could not use her as interpreter. It was necessary to reduce to the lowest possible limit the number of mouths to be fed in the new city, restricting the garrison to persons able to fight. Isabel carried a letter to Enciso, and on the same boat went the slaves and the gold collected at the sack of Yurbaco. These remittances would prove quite valuable, and be likely to encourage Enciso to hurry his preparations.

When the colonists at San Sebastian had finished the fort and the palisade, Ojeda began reconnoitering the nearby territory, which was covered with a dense forest and peopled by hostile tribes. A certain chief of the neighborhood was reported by prisoners to be rich in gold. And the Governor, accordingly, decided to pay

him a visit. But this friendly gesture did not have the effect desired. The Spaniards made their way in force into a pass that crossed the mountains near the coast; but there they were set upon by a great swarm of Indian archers who shot at them from secure hiding places in the underbrush. Some of Ojeda's men were instantly killed, others died a slower and more painful death with horrible convulsions. Sword in hand the Spaniards would charge the thickets, crying challenges to their enemies in loud voices. Not an Indian could be found, though the poisoned arrows kept coming. In the end, this gruesome mode of warfare threw the soldiers into a panic, and they fled back toward the fortress in the greatest disorder. If they were not overwhelmed under the clubs of the pursuing natives, it was because Ojeda, Pizarro, Cuevas, and a few others, retired with their faces to the foe, charging with drawn swords whenever the Indians dared show themselves. So great was the demoralization in the colony after this ambushade, that many days went by before Ojeda could induce his men to take the field again; and then they yielded, less to his persuasion, than to the more pressing argument furnished by hunger.

Provisions were beginning to grow scarce indeed, and the colonists finally found courage to set forth in small parties to search the immediate neighborhood of the stockade, not for gold, but for food. Shortly, however, one of these expeditions likewise fell into a trap and this time the enemy pursued the terrified fugitives with deafening outcries to the very gates of the palisade. Many Spaniards fell in the woods and died where they lay. Such of the wounded as reached the fort soon per-

ished in great agony. In spite of the many remedies devised for treating the wounds caused by the poisonous arrows, very few of the victims got well, and those apparently because the shafts in question had lost part of their wrappings of grass. Terrified at the sufferings of their dead comrades, the men still able to fight could not now be persuaded to leave the stockade even to get food.

The woods seemed to be alive with Indians who began appearing indifferently in the clearings in front of the town, calling to each other night and day, inciting and insulting the white warriors, to noisy accompaniments of horns, conch shells and wooden drums. The garrison of San Sebastian was now eating nothing but roots and grasses gathered near by, under the very guns of the Spanish sentinels. Not even then did they escape occasional losses from the deadly arrows. Bad and insufficient food was lowering the physical resistance of the colonists, and diseases were breaking out. One or more deaths were to be counted every day within the stockade. On two occasions, as Cuevas made his rounds of the works at night, he found sentinels dead from sheer starvation. Profound despondency settled on the less resilient spirits. Many men were pleading to be killed, seeing in death the one possible escape from their desperate plight. In the end only Ojeda, Cuevas, Pizarro, and a handful of the soldiers closest to them, had still sufficient strength and determination to think of facing the enemy.

But the Governor was now leading every foraging party in person, joining the ranks like any underling and fighting the Indians for long hours at a time to win



the prize of a few handfuls of corn. Cuevas had seen nothing just like this since the weeks, years before, in the fort at "Doubting Thomas," where another garrison of Don Alonso had been similarly besieged by the warriors of Caonabo. But the Indians on Haiti knew only the hand-to-hand encounter. These archers with the poisoned shafts, skilled in warfare at long range, were a much more terrible foe.

Shortly the heroism of "The Little White Chief" began to make a great impression on the tribes in the neighborhood of San Sebastian. During each sortie Don Alonso was killing more Indians single-handed than all his other soldiers put together. The white warrior seemed to be endowed with superhuman strength and superhuman lightness of foot. Though hundreds of arrows found their mark upon his body, not one so far had done him any harm. His moving shield drew arrows like a magnet but it was never pierced.

There was evidently something uncanny about all this. The Spaniards, as well as Ojeda himself, were convinced that he enjoyed divine protection so long as he wore his Virgin at his belt. A few prisoners who had been taken into the fort and later escaped repeated to their fellow Indians stories the Spanish soldiers had told them of their chief. The Indians were beginning to share this faith in the miraculous influence of the little idol of the white man.

However, the hostile chiefs were turning all their attention to this intrepid adversary, overlooking the other Spanish soldiers in contempt. It was curiosity as much as anything else. They were eager to discover whether he really were some extraordinary being protected by

gods they did not know. They arranged, accordingly, a rather elaborate stratagem. They selected four of their best marksmen and stationed them on the edge of the forest across the clearing from the stockade with orders to aim at no one except the Little White Chief. Then a large party of braves pushed forward into the open, raising a din with drums, trumpets and war cries, and challenging the Spaniards to battle. As he observed all this from the watch tower, Cuevas suspected that some subtle manœuvre must underlie these tactics; since hitherto the Indians had always preferred to fight from cover. Ojeda, however, could not brook the insult. He buckled on his armor, drew his sword, and made ready to attack the Indians, calling for volunteers to follow him.

"Look out, look out!" called Cuevas. "There is some trick here! They have been trying to get you! You stay inside the fort and let me lead the sortie with our soldiers!"

But as was ever the habit of the Knight of the Virgin in the moment of crisis, he would listen to no suggestions whether from superior or subordinate. In a second he was out in the clearing, charging with drawn sword upon the savages, far in advance of his men. According to their plan, the Indians gave ground before him, but retreated toward the place where they had posted their archers. Ojeda followed in his usual fury, in speed of foot far outstripping the few Spaniards who had ventured forth.

The four Indian archers let go at short range. Three of the arrows struck fair on Don Alonso's shield and hung quivering in the half pierced metal. But the fourth found its mark in the joint of Ojeda's armor just at the

knee, pierced the covering, went through the muscle, and came out on the other side.

He sank to the ground, unable to move his leg. For the first time in his whole life, the invulnerable warrior saw blood of his own gushing from a cut in his charmed body. For the first time he realized that he had been wounded.

From the woods about rose a pandemonium of triumphant shouting, and then the Indians vanished to celebrate their double victory over their hitherto unconquered adversary and the miraculous idol which protected him.

Cuevas ran down from his post on the stockade to meet the group of soldiers who were bringing Don Alonso in on a chair formed by two crossed lances. Ojeda was deathly pale and seemed to be in great pain. But quite apart from that, Fernando did not know the man before him. It was not so much the sting of the wound nor the fact that for the first time in his life Ojeda found himself face to face with death. It was the inner transformation, the prostration of spirit, which he had undergone. His Virgin had failed him—the charm which had always made him invulnerable in battle had been dissolved forever! Not that he had lost faith in the power of Our Lady, who had been attending him everywhere! If at last a wound had come, it had come because he had committed some mortal sin. She was withdrawing Her protection because of that!

However, when he reached his cot in the fort and had rested a little, his fierce will began to assert itself. He thought of the horrible convulsions in which most of his comrades who had been pricked by these deadly arrows

had died. A knight of his stamp could not end like a mad dog writhing in a fit!

The first symptom produced by the "hierba" was a sense of cold and numbness in the wound itself which gradually reached out in all directions, guided, as it were, by a sharp point which seemed to bore its way through the flesh. Ojeda recognized this sensation in himself already, and dealt with the crisis in characteristic manner. Following an impulse as brutal as it was logical, he ordered a remedy which only he could possibly have endured. Cuevas leaped back from the bed aghast as he received the order. The Knight of the Virgin had himself jerked the arrow free on the ground outside the fort where he had fallen, without betraying the slightest tremor from the anguish he must have felt. He was now commanding that two plaques of iron be detached from a corselet, heated white-hot in a fire, and applied to the two openings in his wound!

For the first time Cuevas dared question an order he had received from such a chief and the doctor of the expedition supported him in his protest.

"I love Your Grace too devotedly," he said, "to act as your murderer!"

"And I swear to God," replied Ojeda furiously, "that if you do not obey me at once I will have you both strung up by the neck!"

Cuevas knew that Ojeda's will was adamant at any moment of decisive action and hastened to help the terrified surgeon in heating the two pieces of metal in the fire. The wounded man supervised the operation himself. He would not even allow Cuevas and Pizarro to hold him down to prevent any possible shrinking or convulsion

while the terrible treatment was being applied. He did not utter a cry. He did not move a muscle while the two white hot plaques were pressed with tongs into the torn muscle at either opening of the wound. The smell of burning flesh pervaded the room. Men standing about fainted. But Ojeda lay impassive, forbidding anyone to suspend the terrible cauterization till he had given the word. Yet the torture was so great that when it was over he asked that a sheet soaked in vinegar be wrapped about him that its chill might relieve the burning agony that was shooting through his whole body. Before the day was over a barrel of vinegar had been used in this barbaric operation devised by the warrior.

While admiring his chief's courage, the surgeon shook his head incredulously. Cuevas too was doubtful as to the effect of such a terrible cure. But to the surprise of everyone, Ojeda straightway began to mend. Fernando had his own method of accounting for this astonishing outcome. As he believed, the fire must have burned the cold out of the poison, depriving it of its chilling properties. Francisco Pizarro was not inclined to accept an explanation so matter-of-fact. He thought it more likely that the Virgin was still looking after Her favorite worshipper in his daily battle with death. She had caused the arrow to lose most of its poison before it reached its mark!

While Don Alonso lay in bed the defenders of San Sebastian remained wholly inactive; and even when he was out of danger and began moving about he was still very weak and unable to lift his sword. This tended to increase the general discouragement. He was the only man capable of rousing the depressed to enthusiasm and



sustaining cheerfulness in the stronger hearts. It was his faculty to be everywhere at once, and every soldier on seeing him in the lead thought himself fighting with a great army certain to win its victory. During many days, while he was still convalescing, San Sebastian was like a city of death. All thought of an advance inland had long since been abandoned. The sole hope for the colonists lay in the sea—the hope that one day Enciso the lawyer would appear with the relief they had long been expecting. But the ocean continued to lie deserted before their eyes. Weeks went by and not the trace of a sail, not the point of a mast, pricked the dead line of the horizon.

One morning, when spirits were at their lowest, a call resounded from the wooden watch tower that rose above the fort, and a sentinel came running to Cuevas, who had been entrusted with the defence of San Sebastian during the illness of the Governor.

“A sail!” cried the soldier, trembling with emotion. “There’s a ship in sight! It is the Lord High Justice come from Santo Domingo with the relief!”

Cuevas thought so too. The vessel must surely be the one chartered by the Bachelor Enciso!

And in fact, when it had dropped anchor in front of the town, the captain landed with a boatload of sailors and declared that he had come from Hispaniola, with a cargo of supplies. Enciso, however, had had nothing to do with the matter!

Now Cuevas and his wife, Lucero, were among the very oldest Spanish residents on the Island. He knew every white man in Santo Domingo. His memory was a sort of register of names and faces, and covered every person who had ever come to Hispaniola, with pertinent notes



as to his virtues and defects. In the captain of this strange vessel, he immediately recognized a certain Bernardino de Talavera, known as one of the least desirable of the colonists in the New World and held in disesteem for many questionable adventures even among the ne'er-do-wells who crowded the "Four Corners."

"This man in charge of a ship?" he whispered to Pizarro. "Outfitter and captain at the same time? He never had a cent to his name, unless he stole it from someone!"

However, in spite of his bad memory of the man, he took him to see Ojeda, since Talavera refused to deal with anyone except the Governor himself. A life of hazard and adventure in this New World of the Mainland, cut off even from the little nucleus of civilization that had formed at Santo Domingo, seemed to give greater brazenness to criminals and to enforce indulgence upon honest men who found themselves obliged by circumstances to accept aid regardless of its source. Talavera and the men with him were at no pains to conceal the piratical nature of their expedition, so unlawful and yet so opportune at the same time!

Bernardino de Talavera was being taken to prison for debt and other irregularities on the island of Hispaniola when Ojeda's vessel, loaded with slaves and with the numerous gold plaques picked up at Yurbaco, came into port. As was usually the case with such expeditions, the moment those on the vessel were safe in port, they forgot all about the hardships they had been enduring and talked boastfully of the prosperity of the city founded by the Governor of New Andalusia. Bachelor Enciso, to say nothing of the squaw Isabel, did their best

to embellish these favorable reports in order to gain support for the relief party which was about to sail. The number of slaves and the amount of gold grew and grew before the covetous eyes of the adventurers who had held aloof from Ojeda's enterprise hitherto. A reckless, impetuous man by nature, Talavera at once conceived a plan for escaping from his creditors and taking refuge in the new colony. Don Alonso needed help? He would find a way of bringing him aid, certain that the Governor of New Andalusia would protect him loyally in exchange for such a service—like all men of action, Don Alonso admired people of daring! He would never stop to consider niceties of character or morality!

Passing the word along to other vagabonds as desperate as himself, Talavera managed to get together a group of seventy adventurers of the worst type, all of them criminals hiding from the authorities, all of them without money or property, but as shrewd and courageous as they were disreputable. Talavera had learned that a Genoese merchantman laden with salt pork and cassava was lying off the Cabo Tiburon on the East Coast of Hispaniola. The opportunity could not have been more favorable for the purpose of getting to San Sebastian. The boat was ready with a fine cargo of supplies. The only question was to get possession of it.

To mislead the agents of justice, Talavera and his seventy men set out from the capital in different directions, gradually making their way after many days of tramping to a point designated in the neighborhood of Cape Tiburon. Only a few sailors were aboard the Genoese ship at the moment. It was no great task to throw them overboard, seize the vessel, weigh anchor,

and put to sea with all sails set. Not one of the pirates was a navigator; and Talavera, suddenly turned captain, was the most ignorant of them all. The very foolhardiness of the adventure was much to Ojeda's liking. He warmed to anything that involved risk and courage. On this occasion too, he listened to the pirate's story without batting an eyelash.

"We have a tough customer on our hands," he said to Cuevas when the man had withdrawn. "But there can be no doubt that the hand of Providence has guided him to us. How otherwise could they have laid a true course to where we are, when not a man aboard knew the first thing about a compass? It must be my Virgin who has brought this flock of black sheep to save our lives!"

And his eyes, which had been gazing at the holy image with an expression of mingled humility and reproachfulness, again began turning upon it in gratitude and restored confidence.

Bitter arguments; however, were soon to break out between Talavera and the Governor as to the value of the provisions stolen—as though they had cost the pirate anything at all! But convinced at last that Ojeda was giving him every particle of gold that was in the fort, Talavera agreed to land the supplies.

The distribution of the bread and pork all but produced a mutiny in San Sebastian. Men who had been most obedient and unpretentious during recent weeks of famine thought the rations specified by the Governor were altogether too small. Cuevas pointed out that Don Alonso had to think of ways and means to keep the colonists alive till his own relief arrived under the lawyer

Enciso. But the more assertive made free to question the explanation :

“No,” they cried, half-famished, “the Governor is thinking of himself ! He is hiding the food away for his own use. He is not the man he was before he got that wound in the knee ! That gypsy told him he was going to die of starvation some day. He believes it, and is taking his precautions !”

The truth was that this incursion of bandits from Talavera’s vessel was undermining discipline in the fort. Many of the men were talking of going back to Hispaniola in the vessel stolen by the pirates. The Governor and his friends gave assurance every day that Enciso would soon be appearing—as though they had some mysterious way of knowing any such thing ; and the soldiers, seizing on that hope, would stand hour after hour gazing out over the water. But the promised fleet never hove into view. Despite the rigorous economy enforced by the Governor, Talavera’s provisions also began to give out. Again colonists were dying daily from illnesses originating in insufficient food. Time and again, now Cuevas, now Pizarro, would report designs on the part of one group or another to seize Talavera’s vessel and make a dash for Hispaniola. Fortunately, Don Alonso was now moving about the town, still lame, but otherwise quite recovered from his wound. His presence served to encourage the men of his own expedition, reviving in them something of the admiring, superstitious awe which they always felt for him personally. However, he was aware that the moment was most critical, and one night, in conversation with Fernando, he confided to him sorrowfully :

"If the Bachelor does not get here pretty soon, we shall die, everyone of us. And yet I can hardly bring myself to abandoning our enterprise. Here in this new country we have our last hope of wealth, fame, authority. If we go back home now, ruined and discredited, how will we ever find the backing for a new expedition?"

And he would harangue his people to inspire them with something of his own heroic determination:

"It is madness, brothers," he would say, "to think of leaving this country which is ours by right, because we find it hard to get possession. We need only a few more men to clean the savages out of the woods. Then the wealth of the country is ours . . . Well, the Bachelor will soon be here with the men we need!"

But since discouragement and breaches of discipline kept on increasing in spite of such arguments, he finally pacified his men with an unexpected proposal:

"Supposing I go to Santo Domingo myself, and hurry back with aid! How would you like that?"

The suggestion appealed to everyone. The colonists all trusted Ojeda's energy, influence, and skill. Aid would be sure to come if he were present in person in the capital to solicit it. And conforming to a system of democratic rule which always appeared somehow in the lives of the Spanish Conquistadores the moment actual warfare did not require the despotic sway of a single authority, the defenders of the little town made a public pact with their chieftain. It was agreed that Francisco Pizarro should remain in charge of the colony as Ojeda's lieutenant, until the arrival of the Bachelor Enciso. The latter would then become first in command by virtue of his partnership in the enterprise and his office as Lord



High Justice of New Andalusia. Pizarro and his men would hold San Sebastian for fifty days. If by that time no word had been received from Ojeda and Enciso had not appeared, they would be free to abandon the colony and make their way back to Hispaniola.

Ojeda left with Pizarro the two brigantines still remaining from his original fleet. They would be available for the return to Santo Domingo at the end of the specified period. He himself would sail in the Genoese merchantman seized by the pirates. Talavera and his men were eager to get away at the earliest possible moment from a town that seemed to them more like a pest house. They had come looking for sudden wealth. They had found hunger and disease. They could not venture beyond the palisades on the land side of the fortress without hearing the yell of some Indian or the whizzing of an arrow tipped with "hierba" past their ears. They much preferred to face goal and gibbet in Santo Domingo than to die like dogs where they were. However unhappy their lives may have been among the men of their race, they were much more bearable than the mortal misery they could look forward to on this wild shore. Talavera, besides, had great respect for Don Alonso de Ojeda and thought him a very powerful person among the colonists at home. He could surely obtain a pardon for the pirates from Don Diego's government, since the crime which they had committed had ended by saving the colony at San Sebastian from total destruction.

Cuevas insisted on following his captain. Pizarro was more than able to govern the town and provide for its defense. If Fernando were to remain at San Sebastian it would be just one more mouth to feed. To tell the truth,



he had another thought as well. He foresaw that a man of Don Alonso's fiery and overbearing disposition would soon be having trouble if he started out alone in a vessel manned by a crew of bandits.

"It will be better to have someone with you," he said. "Your Grace must not forget the kind of men Talavera has brought along. You will have to use great caution in dealing with them and, for one thing, control your temper!"

Futile counsel! The Knight of the Virgin, pale of face, emaciated from starvation, still crippled by his wound, was as arrogant and harsh as he had ever been. The moment he reached the quarter-deck of the stolen merchantman he became its commander, giving orders to its crew of rascals as though the vessel belonged to him, bidding them lift the anchors and unfurl the sails with the tone of a ship-captain who did not doubt in the least that he would be obeyed. And the inevitable occurred even before the vessel put to sea. Don Alonso was standing on the poop when Talavera came up beside him as though he too were captain, and began shouting orders to the men as Ojeda had been doing.

The little White Chief seemed to Cuevas somehow to double his stature, as he did at every moment of decisive action. He turned to the man at his side, surveyed him with a glance of blistering scorn, and then shouted:

"Down there, Talavera! Your place is down there."

And he pointed to the group of sailors standing about the main-mast.

In a place where Don Alonso de Ojeda was, there could be only one captain!

## CHAPTER II

### MUD

Talavera obeyed, overawed by the personality of that born leader of men. He left the quarter-deck and joined his comrades. And that day nothing further happened. The pirates were all interested in watching Don Alonso. He was the only man aboard with any experience in navigation. He knew how to dress the sails and lay the course.

But the following morning trouble began. Backed by his own men, Talavera appeared in the aftercastle, which Ojeda had set apart for his personal quarters, pointed out that the vessel really belonged to him and that he therefore had as much authority as Don Alonso or perhaps more. But he could not continue in that vein. The impetuous Governor of New Andalusia cut him short at his first sentence:

"This ship is yours?" he cried, addressing him with a contemptuous *thou*. "All you did is steal it! However, there is an easy way of settling our quarrel: unsheathe your sword and let the survivor be commander!"

And he drew forth his naked blade, and advanced upon Talavera, who had also drawn his weapon. But the pirate had seventy men behind him, all implicated in his criminal adventure and aware that his cause was theirs. In an instant they had crowded upon Cuevas and Don

Alonso giving them no room to move their arms, grappling with them, depriving them of their swords, bearing them to the deck under weight of numbers. The two were clapped into irons at once and locked up in one of the lower cabins of the aftercastle, a dark room where the only air came through a narrow grating in the door. But Ojeda felt in no wise chastened at this treatment from a crowd of bandits who held him at their mercy. On the contrary, he lay cursing and shouting in a loud voice, belaboring with insults any of the pirates who appeared in the neighborhood of the grating.

"Traitors, thieves!" he cried. "I'll lick you all, one at a time, two at a time, four at a time—any way you choose! Tell that coward of a Talavera to come down here! I'll wager he doesn't dare show his face!"

And Don Alonso was not mistaken. His reputation as a fighter had won the secret admiration of all those outcasts. They carefully avoided approaching his prison. Talavera, the butt of Ojeda's continuous insults, elected to say nothing and keep out of sight, holding the dread captain safe under lock and key until the voyage should come to an end. The only person in the crew whom Don Alonso and Cuevas had a chance to speak to was the cook's mate who brought them regular rations at the regular hours.

Four days went by in this manner. But then a storm blew up. Talavera and his men had had no experience with the dangers of the tropical sea. They became excited at once and did not know what measures to take. It occurred to them merely to lower most of the sails, leaving the ship under poles all but bare. They could see, however, that they were caught in a swift current and

feared they might be swept on some hidden shoal. In their panic the pirates remembered that Don Alonso was a good sailor. They hurried at once to his prison, removed his irons, and begged him to take command. Cuevas also they set free because he enjoyed considerable prestige as a navigator wherever he went from having accompanied the Old Admiral on the First Voyage.

On returning to the quarter-deck, Ojeda soon saw that it would be useless to think of making Hispaniola. Talavera had been following a course too far toward the West and what with an adverse current and the wind that was blowing, it would be impossible to head towards Santo Domingo. Seams, meantime, were opening in the vessel's hull. At any moment she might founder if the hurricane continued.

For a long time the boat drifted like a piece of wreckage at the mercy of the elements. Ojeda concluded that Cuba was the nearest land; and when the storm was over he figured a course which he thought would bring him to the South Coast of that island. The water in the hold was long since out of control, and when the shore came up the mariners had barely time to ground the vessel on a strip of deserted beach. There her timbers cracked apart, and there was no choice but to abandon her, taking to the land with such supplies as the men could carry on their backs.

Cuba was still a practically unknown wilderness. Two years before, some ships had rounded the Western point and definitely established that Cuba was an island, as Juan de la Cosa had indicated on his map and as the Indians had asserted even at the time of the First Voyage. The interior, however, was as yet unexplored

and for this group of shipwrecked sailors destitute of all resources it seemed almost certain death to plunge inland through the woods toward the mountains that were visible from the shore.

The moment their feet touched dry land, the bandits again declared their independence of Don Alonso—it was no longer a question of finding someone to navigate a ship! Talavera at once announced that he was leader of the party and Ojeda and Cuevas saw themselves again in danger of their lives. But the pirates were not slow in perceiving that the perils which awaited them on that savage shore were as great as any they had faced at sea. They needed a chief as courageous and resourceful as the famous and much tried Knight of the Virgin!

Columbus had found the Indians in Cuba for the most part peacefully inclined, their main occupation the cultivation of their fields of corn. But in the fifteen years following the Second Voyage, many Haitians had escaped to Cuba from the slavery imposed upon them by the whites at Santo Domingo. They had warned the Cubans; and now whenever any crew of Europeans landed on their shores to take on fuel or water the Indians made haste to attack them, thinking that they were coming either to recapture fugitives or to take new slaves for export to Santo Domingo. As soon as Talavera struck inland, he was assailed by hordes of natives with bows and arrows. After this failure of their chief the pirates returned to Ojeda and Cuevas the swords of which they had been deprived and Don Alonso was recognized as captain.

He straightway ordered a march to the East. He had conceived the unheard of plan of marching more than a

thousand miles to the eastern point of Cuba, whence perhaps he might go by canoe across the hundred miles of water that lay between Cuba and Hispaniola, and then follow the coasts of that island till he reached the capital at Santo Domingo! Everyone in the company except Don Alonso and Cuevas knew that at the end of that perilous journey of weeks and weeks only the gallows could be waiting. Yet the pirates were as eager to reach that goal as they would have been a haven of beatitude. Even the grim justice of a civilized community was more tolerable than this inhospitable wilderness peopled by savages.

The captain saw that with such men he could not cope with any tribe of hostile Indians that might attack him, and he decided to avoid all native towns. Sticking closely to the shore, he guided his party across broad, desert savannahs, and through forests which reached to the very water's edge. This march along the southern coast of Cuba, across lands unknown to all in the company and with no provisions save such as each man could carry on his back, proceeded without incident for several days. But then Ojeda began observing with some uneasiness that the woods were receding farther and farther from the sea, while the savannahs covered with grass and creeping vines were softening under his feet, gradually turning into marsh. Sometimes the soldiers would sink without warning up to their knees in a loathsome mud that would tremble, squirm, and finally give way beneath them.

"Never mind!" called the captain to cheer his men. "This can't last very long. I can see better going ahead! Santiago! Forward!"

And often he would think in good faith he could see



before him meadows of solid ground like the ones they had left behind; but the green grass would be only a treacherous covering for bottomless pools of mud and slime. Eight days of such marching, with water and mud frequently reaching their belts, convinced the party that they were caught in a great swamp which apparently had no end. To make their situation more desperate, the stagnant water about them was salt and to drink it was only to increase one's thirst. But then again, the water would be fresh and they would all drink eagerly: they had come upon some river that flowed down from the mountains inland and seeped away into the marsh without finding any direct outlet into the sea. But such channels would be filled with mud and slime to great depths. Once a man, unable to swim, was caught in them he was beyond help; his companions could not rescue him.

For that matter, not a day passed without the loss of one or more lives. The scanty rations of cassava bread and cheese which had been saved from the vessel were eked out with roots, berries and edible plants that could occasionally be found. But such food was insufficient to sustain the expenditure of strength involved in long marches, always made through water in drenched clothes. One by one the Spaniards were dropping away. When Ojeda observed that his men were at the end of their strength and were growing sleepy he would halt the march and the company would find beds on the mangrove roots that formed mattings over the pools of stagnant water. During such rests Cuevas would silently count the faces still to be seen. Each time they would be fewer in number.

Constant danger, the continuous presence of death, made everyone cruelly selfish.

“Help, help! I am caught, brothers! Help, for God’s sake!”

The cry would come from somewhere back in the line. Some poor fellow would find himself sinking in the mire. But the call would not be repeated many times. A brief struggle, a few anguished moans, a blubbering on the liquid surface, and the man would vanish, never to be seen again. No one looked around. All ears were deaf to such appeals for succor. Those who had any strength left at all had only the one thought, to go on and on as fast and as far as possible; to get somehow somewhere—to the end of this marsh into which they had now plunged so far that it was madness to think of turning back. The mud seemed to grow slimier and slimier each day, and the pools deeper. Edible berries and edible roots had not been seen for a long time. The bread brought from the ship had mildewed and spoiled from the rank humidity.

Ojeda seemed to be the only man still in good condition. He was continuing at the head of the line, picking the best and safest road he could discover. A skillful swimmer, he succeeded in extricating himself from all the traps in the treacherous mud into which he fell; and his own errors of this kind saved his bedraggled men from the same perils. Cuevas found each hour fresh reasons to admire the spirit and endurance of this extraordinary man. He himself would sink to the ground at the limit of his strength unable to go forward; and he would refuse to rise to his feet again, preferring rather

to die. But then he would hear the cheery voice of the commander:

"What's this, Fernandillo? Your wife and little Alonsico are waiting for you at home! As long as a man is alive he mustn't despair of God's help!"

Most of the men had either lost their weapons or thrown them away in this march through mud and water. A few had kept their swords, finding them useful as canes. Don Alonso had carefully stowed the little image of his Virgin in his knapsack, and whenever the line of men would halt at some clump of mangroves, he would draw the miniature forth, set it up in the crotch of two branches, kneel before it, and in a loud voice offer a prayer that the Mother of God might not forget Her worshippers. Cuevas would join in the prayers, and on one such occasion Don Alonso remarked to him in a half apologetic tone:

"It was a bad bet you made, Fernando, when you chose to follow me!"

These invocations to the Virgin were now being made more frequently and all those who were following the Commander, pirates though they were, obeying him not of choice but of necessity, also began to kneel in superstitious awe before that little bit of wood painted in Flanders and bought in a shop by a Spanish bishop.

As he struggled along, Don Alonso would keep trying to imagine just why his protectress was subjecting him to this desperate trial. For twenty-five days now they had been advancing over one great lake of water and slime, often frankly swimming, then again splashing forward with water up to their shoulders, or clinging desperately to some slippery tree-trunk to free their feet

from sucking sands. The swamp indeed promised to have no end! And suddenly it occurred to the roving fancy of the captain that perhaps this was a warning from the Virgin, that he had been tiring Her with all the voyages and adventures he had been inflicting on Her these many years, taking Her to the most out of the way countries through the greatest dangers.

"You are right, Señora!" he cried with a sudden flash of persuasion. "You are right! You get us out of this muck and the moment we reach dry land I will build you a chapel in the first Indian village we come to, and there I will leave you to be worshipped by these heathen forever."

Cuevas was to live to a very advanced age, but he could never forget the horrors of that desperate tramp across the great "Ciénaga" of southern Cuba. While he was telling the story of the experience years later to Friar Bartholomew de las Casas, then bishop of Santo Domingo and a great defender of the Indians, the celebrated author of the "History of the Conquest" remarked:

"The hardships of the Spaniards in the New World were incomparably greater than those endured by the explorers of all the other nations put together. But those of Ojeda, and you who were with him on that adventure in Cuba, far exceeded anything experienced by other Spaniards."

The swamp in fact was some six score miles in breadth. It took Ojeda thirty days to cross it. Sometimes the tangled vegetation was so thick that a day would be spent in traversing a bare league. Yet obstacles of this kind saved many lives by preventing the marchers from

sinking over their heads in the shifting, treacherous soil. The last days of the crossing were the most terrible. Some of the men went insane and drowned themselves in the pools to put an end to their frightful sufferings. Others would take seats on the ground, lean back against the trunks of the trees and close their eyes:

“March on, brothers, don’t bother with me!”

Such exhortations were needless. No one thought of bothering with them. They would be left there to meet their deaths alone.

But finally one day Ojeda noticed that the pools were not so deep, that the ground seemed firmer, that stretches of dry land were appearing here and there. And at last he led his men out upon ground that was frankly solid. The Spaniards had not gone far from the edge of the marsh when they came upon a well-beaten road. It led to an Indian village. As the native bohios came into view the refugees seemed to experience a strange spiritual collapse. Their strength suddenly left them. They fell to the ground, all of them, at the entrance to the town—they could go no farther.

The chief of the Indians in that region, Cueybas by name, was peacefully inclined, and so were his subjects. They gathered in astonishment about these strange men who had fallen at their doors. They could not believe their ears when they learned that the white men had marched all the way across that deadly swamp into which the Indians themselves ventured only in cases of extreme necessity. The prostrated warriors were carried to the Indian dwellings and supplied with an abundance of food and drink; while the chief sent braves of his tribe to

scour the marshes and bring in any men who might still be alive. When Ojeda had sufficiently recovered to collect his thoughts, he found that of the seventy-two men with whom he had abandoned ship, only thirty-five were still present, among them Bernardino Talavera.

His first care on finding himself able to walk again was to fulfill his vow to his Virgin. It was a great sorrow for him to separate at last from his marvelous image, but he believed that only because of his vow had the Virgin brought him safely through such deadly peril. He interviewed the chief at great length and tried to make clear as best he could in words he had picked up in Haiti and the few Cuevas remembered from his days in Cuba, the mysteries of the Catholic religion and just who the Mother of God was. The Indian listened gravely to all he heard, with many reverent nods of his head. What delighted him most was the beauty of the idol of the white man and the brilliant colors in which the Flemish painter had fixed the features of the Virgin on such a small piece of wood.

Ojeda cut off a corner in the house of the chief with hangings of cotton to make a sort of little room apart. Then he built a table and set the image on it as on an altar. The chapel was done! He and his men lingered two weeks more in the Indian village before they had enough strength to resume their march. As he knelt for the last time before his beloved image Ojeda burst into sobs. To be severed from his protectress after all these years! Who could say what the future might have in store for him now that he would be without the miraculous charm which had carried him unhurt through so



much bloodshed, drawn him safely from so many plights? Cuevas finally had to drag him from the altar, trying to halt his weeping with words of encouragement.

Some years later, Father de las Casas made a journey through Cuba. He came to that very village, found the miniature of the Virgin in the little chapel which Ojeda had built for Her in the residence of Cueybas, and actually sang a Mass before Ojeda's altar. But unluckily he suggested to Cueybas that he would like to buy the image of the Little White Chief and replace it with a much more gorgeous one. The chieftain spirited the Virgin away to a hiding place in the woods. No one ever saw Her again!

Cueybas provided the expedition with abundant supplies and sent a party of Indians to guide Ojeda for the rest of the journey through the wilderness. They succeeded in reaching a district called Mecaca on the South Coast which the Indians believed nearest to Jamaica. Cueybas had recommended the party to the chief in the region. From this latter ruler Don Alonso learned that a party of Spaniards had already occupied Jamaica under the command of a captain named Juan de Esquivel.

That name suddenly reminded Ojeda of his quarrelsome days in Santo Domingo. Esquivel was the envoy whom Don Diego Colon had hurriedly dispatched to Jamaica to prevent Nicuesa or Ojeda from settling there. Don Alonso had solemnly sworn to lift the man's head from his shoulders.

"I can see, my dear Fernando," he said sadly when he heard the news, "that my destiny is always to get down on my knees before people whom I have insulted."

Had he not heaped revilements on Nicuesa's head in Santo Domingo, only to find that chivalrous gentleman saving his life at the end of the terrible battle in which Juan de la Cosa had perished? Now again he had to beg a favor of the man whom he had arrogantly forbidden to set foot on Jamaica! That Esquivel had gone thither was now the one thing that would rescue him and his men from this island of Cuba which they were beginning to think of as a tomb that would hold their bones forever.

However, eighty miles of tide-rip lay between Cuba and Jamaica. To make this crossing in the frail canoe which the "King of Mecaca" could place at the disposal of the Spaniards with a few Indian paddlers was a feat comparable to the voyage made by Diego Mendez from Jamaica to Santo Domingo to rescue Columbus at the unhappy end of the Fourth Voyage. Fernando Cuevas nevertheless made the journey in company with a man named Pedro de Ordaz. No sooner did Esquivel learn the plight of his enemy Ojeda, whom he had thought of as ruling rich and victorious in his province of New Andalusia, than a caravel was sent to the South Shore of Cuba to bring on the unlucky hero and his enforced companions.

The meeting of the two men was cordial enough. Ojeda had sworn to clip off Esquivel's head. Actually, he greeted him on the seashore at Jamaica as though they had always been the best of friends.

"Juan de Esquivel," he said, after a bow, "my oars have taken their last dip! I am at your mercy! Do with me as you will!"

Esquivel stepped forward and embraced him, took

him to his own house, and placed everything he had at his disposal.

"You and I understand each other!" he said to Ojeda. "Gentlemen well born do not need to be told certain things! We have seen each other in better days and in pleasanter places. Let us forget the resentments of the past."

And once more Cuevas could only remark the strange high-mindedness and consideration these rough Conquistadores could show each other when they were not seeking each other's blood. Their implacable cruelties were kept for men not of their race.

Anxious to get aid to Pizarro and the garrison at San Sebastian at the earliest moment, Ojeda gratefully accepted the caravel which Juan de Esquivel offered for his immediate use. Talavera, however, and the others of his crew of pirates decided to postpone their return. Now that they were treading Spanish soil again the gallows began to assume greater importance before their eyes. They preferred to halt at Jamaica. They were afraid they might have to account to the Lord High Justice of Hispaniola for the seizure of the Genoese merchantman. As for Ojeda, who, after all, was still Governor of New Andalusia, they feared he might demand satisfaction for the indignities they had heaped upon him during the return voyage. But their minds were relieved of this latter worry when Don Alonso and Cuevas boarded ship for Santo Domingo.

"May God be merciful to you, my dear Talavera!" said Ojeda to the pirate. "Don't imagine I shall forget what you did to me. But don't imagine, either, I would be capable of seeking unfair vengeance by handing you

over to the authorities. Some day, when I am less occupied with the affairs of my government, and in case you get clear of stealing that ship, I would like to have a talk with you in some quiet spot! I am sure you would like an introduction to the feel of my sword!"

The moment the caravel arrived in port at Santo Domingo, Don Alonso inquired for the Bachelor Enciso. He learned that the lawyer had set sail a few days before, headed for the colony at San Sebastian with an abundance of men, arms, and ammunition. The effects of that first cargo of gold and slaves which had inspired Talavera's act of piracy still persisted in the public mind at the capital. The adventurers left in town were all eager to sail with Enciso for the province which he was to rule as Lord High Justice. The viceroy, Don Diego Colon, had, for his part, been obliged to set a limit on the number of enlistments. Suddenly every one who owed any money or was otherwise involved with the law on the island, seemed anxious to escape and join Ojeda. The Viceroy placed an armed guard on Enciso's vessel and examined each individual who came on board. When the ship left port an armed caravel was sent to escort it far out to sea to prevent fugitives from rowing off shore in small boats to board it.

Ojeda could do little but wait for news from his partner. Undoubtedly the moment the Bachelor reached San Sebastian he would send his vessel back to Santo Domingo to reconvey the Governor of New Andalusia to his exalted post. But weeks and weeks went by and not the slightest news or rumor came in from Enciso's party. People began to believe his ship had foundered in one

of the great storms which had swept the islands shortly after his departure.

Fernando Cuevas went back to his farm, to be welcomed by cries of astonished joy from Lucero and their child. The hardships he had suffered in the defense of San Sebastian and on the march across the *Ciénaga* in Cuba seemed to have added years to his age. Not till he found himself once more in the cheerfulness and comfort of his own home did he really grasp the horrors he had just survived. Lucero and Alonsico listened in thoughtful silence to his long tale of adventure and misfortune. Then the good sense of this Jewish girl who had been his life-long companion and counsellor drew the sum of the whole heroic experience in a comment fraught with all her instinct for the practical:

“If Don Alonso ever goes back out there, don’t you think of going with him! Leave this chase after gold for people who haven’t a family as you have, nor lands as good as ours. Let us attend to our fields. We must still clear the lands along the river—we have been all but forgetting them. We have our gold mine right here at home, supplying bread and meat to people who are mad enough to go out to the Mainland to pick up the nuggets lying loose on the ground! There will be plenty more such fools as soon as those we have now get killed! They keep coming in on every ship from Spain!”

For another thing, Lucero did not like to see her husband keeping company with all those rough-and-tumble burlies, who were afraid of nothing in the world, neither God nor man, and seemed to get more conceited still the less they worked and the less they had in their pockets.



And along this course of thinking she came to the story of what she had done to help one of Fernando's old friends, a man whom Don Alonso de Ojeda for some reason had chosen to dislike. The man in question happened to be heavily in debt. That was why he had not been allowed to enlist in Enciso's expedition. Don Diego had barred egress from the island to all individuals in any way compromised at law. The Bachelor could not afford to incur the Viceroy's displeasure. Besides, he already knew that this particular recruit happened to be at outs with his partner, the Governor of New Andalusia.

"So finally," said Lucero, "he turned to me. He was a friend of yours, even if Don Alonso did not appreciate him. So I thought I would help him all I could—it was I who gave him the hogshead!"

"The hogshead?" asked Fernando, puzzled.

"He went aboard in the hogshead!" Lucero answered.

Yes, the man got into a barrel and had it headed in. To make his stratagem more plausible he kept pouring the drinking water he had taken with him around the cracks in the staves. Then the few drops that seeped through would remove any doubt that the hogshead contained water and was destined to the hold of Enciso's vessel! In that way he got past the officers of the Viceroy without any examination. When the vessel was well out at sea he intended to kick the head of the barrel out and present himself before Ojeda's partner as a comrade in adventure!

Cuevas could not help telling the story the following day to his sometime commander, though he decided to keep his amusement to himself in view of the anger Don Alonso might choose to feel.



“Does your Grace remember,” he said, “that fellow who used to hang around the ‘Four Corners’? We used to call him ‘The Fencing Master.’ His real name was Balboa. He had a little farm, you know, somewhere in the neighborhood of Durango. He was up to his eyes in debt and didn’t know how he was going to keep out of jail, with so many creditors after him! Well, the laugh is on them! Vasco Nuñez de Balboa is safely out at sea with the Bachelor Enciso! He went aboard unbeknownst to everyone—in a barrel!”

## CHAPTER III

### THE CASTAWAYS

Don Alonso began to sense about him the aloofness and distrust which comes to every hero fallen on evil days. His efforts to buy a ship and enlist a crew to return to his capital in San Sebastian all proved vain. He found that people avoided him as a man marked by evil fortune. The tribulations of his colony, exaggerated rather than not in the reports that were made of them, were now a matter of common knowledge at Santo Domingo. Don Diego Colon seemed to find satisfaction in the growing unpopularity of the hero. Ojeda had been estranged from the Old Admiral toward the end of the latter's life, and had said many harsh things against the whole tribe of the Colons. But the Viceroy had not been pleased, on his own score, at these more recent grants on the Mainland which he regarded as violations of the Colon monopoly. He may have hoped that Don Alonso would be brought to implore his aid and sail in future as one of the Colon lieutenants. But in proportion as Ojeda declined physically and in fortune he seemed to grow prouder and prouder, becoming ever more incapable of seeking favors, of taking service under anyone. He could see himself only as a heroic leader of dare-devil adventures—and if that could not be, he would prefer to die!

The ingratitude of men nevertheless embittered him profoundly. He had been glorified as a man of wonders when he captured Caonabo at Isabella; and his prestige had grown, if anything, when he set out with expeditions of his own to discover new lands in the wake of the Old Admiral. A year earlier he had felt sure enough of himself to defy the Viceroy on a public wharf in Santo Domingo and threaten one of Don Diego's best men with decapitation! And everyone had applauded such bravados, believing that fortune would attend him always, that no obstacle was great enough to block his ascent to wealth and power. But now one of those abrupt reversals in popular fancy had made him out a ruined adventurer, a man without a future, his footsteps dogged at any rate by constant misfortune. Any plan he put forward, however rational it may have been, they regarded as fantastic. People of money on the Island avoided him for fear lest any near approach might result in a request for a loan. They were not eager to share the fate of the Bachelor Enciso, now given up as lost! The Government of New Andalusia had become a subject of mirth, when it chanced to be mentioned in talk at the "Four Corners."

Sometimes in sheer rage at the hostility that was bearing upon him, Don Alonso would think of getting away from Hispaniola as best he might and never coming back again. A comrade's loyalty also impelled him not to desert Enciso and his faithful friend Pizarro, if ever he could get to them! They might still be with the colony at San Sebastian. His return there might be the saving of their lives! But however often he went down to the waterfront and talked with captains or ship-masters who

entered port, he could never find one willing to accommodate him. None of them had time to waste! Why undertake the perilous voyage to Darién just to do a favor to a so-called "Governor" who would never give them a penny for their trouble?

And superstition, as much as any other one thing, contributed to the discredit of Ojeda in that little world of speculation and rash adventure. The sailors and soldiers about the capital were certain that Enciso had perished at sea, that not a Spaniard was left alive in the colony at San Sebastian—a place blockaded by the marksmen of the poisoned arrows! And not a word meantime from Nicuesa! He had gone out with eight hundred men to conquer Veragua, the land of prodigies so much extolled by the Old Admiral! What had become of him? What had become of his army? At the very best the name of Castile the Golden would make a fine inscription for his tombstone! There was much talk at the "Four Corners" of a prophecy a friar had made on the occasion of the twin departure of Ojeda and Nicuesa. Some days before a comet had appeared in the sky with a tail that spread out like a great sword-blade—an indubitable sign of death, according to the astrologers of the time! The friar in question had predicted baldly that neither of the two adventurers would ever come home again.

"But I came back, didn't I?" Don Alonso would say in irritation at such nonsense. "I sailed even sooner than Nicuesa did and here I am, safe and sound in Santo Domingo! Why should not the Governor of Castile the Golden be as lucky as I?"

And few would venture to refute his argument. Don Alonso still handled a crafty sword. It was not the

wisest thing in the world to irritate him. But people would smile significantly, and the smiles meant that Ojeda had indeed returned—but he still had plenty of time to die: you could never be sure how soon his end might come!

The Captain ended by avoiding even intimate friends. More and more rarely was he to be seen about the "Four Corners," wrapped proudly in his cape (perhaps to hide the patches on his garments), his sword thrown up behind in jaunty swagger, his eyes roving uneasily about in mood of challenge, his face as peaked as the beak of a bird of prey, never recognizing anyone unless he had first been recognized and with a cordiality that gave unquestioned sign of reverence. If he spoke at all it was to heap abuse upon the youthful Viceroy; and this accelerated the scattering of his former friends. No one cared to incur the wrath of that supreme authority in the colony for no reason at all!

Even Fernando Cuevas drifted away. He had lost none of his love or respect for his former chief. But Lucero was a clear-sighted housewife. She felt that too great intimacy with Ojeda could only result in trouble and misfortune for her family.

"That blessed Don Alonso of yours," she would say to her husband, "will leave us all as poor as rats! I have always told you, and by this time you must have found out for yourself, that you can't make money anywhere except by working. We are better off than many people, and we have earned what we have, by sitting quietly at home where we belong!"

To a large extent Lucero was right. More than once Ojeda had suggested to Cuevas that he sell the lands he

held in the interior and which he was developing with so much hope! Or even—he might mortgage them! There was no lack of money-lenders in Santo Domingo, new as the colony was! And with the money he and Don Alonso could buy a little boat—almost anything would do! The voyage they had taken with Talavera and the crowd of pirates had shown that he and Fernando together were sailors capable of dealing with any situation! So they would get back to the lands of New Andalusia where Enciso and their former comrades were—facing the poisoned arrows of the natives, one might grant, but undoubtedly amassing gold—who could say how much?

At such pleadings Cuevas would stammer in embarrassment. He could not bring himself to refusing a request of his former protector; at the same time he could not thwart the wishes of his wife. When Don Alonso came to see that Lucero was the real obstacle to his plan he refrained from further argument. He always stood somewhat aloof in the presence of Fernando's wife, as though the thought of her suggested many things he would much rather have forgotten. He ended by avoiding Cuevas altogether and the two friends did not see each other for many months. For one thing Fernando and Lucero had moved into the interior to apply themselves seriously to clearing the lands they had recently inherited from the Indian princess. They were now absent from the city for weeks at a time.

But Cuevas could not forget the companions he had left on the western shore of the Carib Sea, whether on the one bank or the other of the Rio Darién in the respective governments of Ojeda and Nicuesa. He was always on the lookout for news of these last expeditions;



and news he had as time went by, fragments of news, that is, as caravels came into port at long intervals to land some straggler from one or the other of the two adventures; or rumors, mere reports from hearsay which nevertheless supplied some detail to piece out the tragic narrative. As he got on in years and became in the end one of the most prosperous farmers in Santo Domingo, Fernando Cuevas could sagely relate to young adventurers departing for the wars in Mexico or Peru the whole wonderful story of the two first efforts of the Spaniards on the American Mainland.

On bidding farewell to Ojeda on the strand before Yurbaco, Nicuesa laid a course westward in search of the golden Veragua. To explore the coast more satisfactorily he divided his fleet into three parts: the heavy ships would keep far off shore to avoid banks and shoals; he would follow close in, in a caravel with seventy men, accompanied by the two brigantines—vessels as light of draught as the caravel—in command of Lope de Olano.

However, a storm shortly blew up and Nicuesa struck off-shore to gain seaway, taking it for granted that his lieutenant, Olano, would follow suit. But Olano sought refuge from the tempest in the lee of a little island; and when the weather cleared, instead of following west along the course designated by his chief, he put about and dropped anchor at the mouth of a stream which was then called the “River of Lizards,” and later received the name “Chagres” (Isthmus of Panama). There shortly the full-riggers, which had been taking the outer course rejoined him. Olano at once reported that he had seen Nicuesa founder at sea and that he, as the deceased commander’s first lieutenant, was now the legal governor.

Nicuesa spent two days at sea lying to before the storm. Then he sailed shoreward again to look for Olano and came to anchor at the mouth of a stream well along to the west with the idea of waiting there till the brigantines and the rest of his fleet should come along. However, he did not observe that the river in question was in high flood in consequence of the torrential rains which had fallen during the days preceding. The waters returned to their normal level with great rapidity. Suddenly he found his vessel aground; and it was so mauled by the swift current that the hull went to pieces almost without warning, the crew saving their lives by swimming ashore.

Nicuesa judged it wiser to continue westward on foot with the idea that he might soon reach the land of plenty described by Columbus. The party crossed marshes of deep mud and marched along beaches baked hot under the tropical sun. Soon the men had lost all their provisions and were reduced to subsisting on shell fish and wild fruits. Streams were numerous and running high because of the rainy season. Fortunately one small boat had been rescued from the wreck and it was possible to get across the deeper channels without much difficulty. The Indians about were hostile. Long range fighters and admirable archers like the natives of New Andalusia, they followed the expedition along the edges of the wilderness shooting poisoned arrows at the Spaniards from cover.

At the time it left Santo Domingo Nicuesa's expedition had been the largest, best equipped, and in general most ostentatious, which had ever been seen up to that time. The commander had spared neither money nor

trouble to have everything of the best. Among other luxuries the Governor of Castile the Golden had given himself a private page dressed in a uniform of gay colors topped by a white hat with plumes. Needless to say, it made the young man look like some gaudy parrot escaped from the tropical wilderness. This brilliant costume could not fail to attract special attention from the Indians. It was a fine mark for the archers and before long a well-aimed arrow stretched the poor boy dead at Nicuesa's feet.

Finally the party came to a point on the shore where a wide bay seemed to open inland, with a corresponding point visible across its mouth. Rather than take the long march around by land it was judged preferable to go directly across by water, squads of men taking their turn in the boat. This manœuvre seemed also to promise the advantage of gaining ground on the pursuing Indians and perhaps of shaking them off for good. By nightfall on the day in question the Spaniards were all on the other shore and disposed to camp on the point for the night. All the men had taken turns at the oars. Everyone was tired.

Two terrible surprises were to greet the expedition the following morning. Four soldiers had disappeared and with them the boat which was the party's only hope! The men began running about this way and that calling and signalling in hopes in being heard by the deserters. But as they climbed the higher rocks they suddenly discovered that water was all about them, a wide roadstead separating them from shore, while in the other directions lay the ever deserted Ocean itself. What they had taken for a point on the Mainland was really an island!

Nicuesa and his companions had marooned themselves on a desert rock!

Gradually the truth dawned upon them. The four deserters had committed an act of incredible treachery! Here were more than sixty white men left to die like dogs on a barren island without a human being within leagues to know of their last sufferings! Perhaps as the years went by some chance expedition might pass that way and think of landing on this uninteresting rock; there a number of skeletons would be found lying about, but it would never be known whether they belonged to natives or to white men! In their despair some of the men howled like animals. Others fell to their knees and raised their hands heavenward in desperate appeal to God. Hunger and thirst finally obliged them to do something. They had nothing to drink except the rain water which had gathered here and there in holes in the rocks. They had nothing to eat except shell fish from the shore.

Nicuesa was as resourceful as Ojeda, though quieter in manner and less harsh in speech. He assured his men that there was no danger, that they would soon escape from their desperate plight. He set everyone to work with knives and swords cutting tree trunks to make a raft that would take them across the broad strait to the shore. The raft was finally launched. But the men had no oars. Some of them were good swimmers and thought of going overboard to tow the raft behind them. But they were too weakened after days of insufficient food and hardship. An off-shore current proved so strong that the attempt had to be abandoned. They were lucky to get back to the island whence they had departed.

The stubborn Nicuesa made other attempts with

smaller rafts; but none of them were successful. So weeks and weeks passed with men dying every day, some of hunger and thirst, others killing themselves in desperation.

The four deserters had stolen the boat for understandable reasons: they had lost faith in this march away from the fleet toward nowhere, regarding it as leading to certain death. They now rowed slowly back toward the place where they thought the fleet was lying, and after great hardship and many dangers finally encountered Olano's party at the mouth of the Rio Belén. There Columbus had tried to establish the first colony on the Mainland. There Olano was now building a village and a fort.

The story of the four deserters caused great excitement among the Spaniards; and much against his will Olano was constrained to send a brigantine to rescue Nicuesa and his men. Bursts of indescribable joy welcomed the ship of rescue as it hove in view off the barren island. It brought a goodly provision of cocoanuts, dates, and other native fruits gathered along the shore, and Nicuesa had to enforce strict discipline to prevent his starving men from killing themselves by overeating. With like eagerness they fell upon the casks in the hold—the first clean water they had had to drink in weeks. After burying the bodies of their dead the refugees sailed away in the brigantine.

On reaching Belén, Nicuesa was properly enraged at Olano and decided to hang him as a traitor along with the others whom he judged accomplices; but the clamorous supplication of the colonists as a whole inclined him for the moment to clemency. He agreed to postpone



the execution of punishment until some later time. To tell the truth, the colonists were not so much better off at Belén than on the desert island Nicuesa and his companions had just left. The natives of the region had pestered Columbus and Don Bartholomew Colon during their short stay on the spot. Now they were beleaguering this new expedition of white men with destructive persistence. Starvation was cutting wide swaths in the garrison and every sortie it made to look for food resulted in losses of greater or lesser seriousness. Just four hundred of the eight hundred men who had sailed from Santo Domingo were still alive, and most of these were so wasted by privation and disease that they were more like walking skeletons than human beings. The torture of hunger drove men of white race and Christian education back to the cannibalism of pre-historic eras. A foraging party of thirty Spaniards which had left the town in search of provisions came upon a dead Indian and ate his body. Nicuesa executed some other soldiers who killed a dying comrade in order to eat his flesh the sooner.

Among the survivors of the expedition was a veteran of Don Cristobal's Fourth Voyage, and this man remembered that at a point along the shore of what is known today as the Isthmus of Panama there was a very safe and beautiful harbor which the late Admiral had in fact named Puerto Bello. The landmark noted by the sailor in his log was a great tree rising on the shore in full view from the ocean. At the trunk of the tree, he said, was a wonderful spring of cold water. To further mark the spot the Admiral's men had left an anchor half buried in the sand. Resolved now to abandon the site at Belén,



Nicuesa sent men along the coast to find the haven in question, and in due time, harbor, tree, spring, and anchor were discovered just as the sailor had said. Unfortunately, the scouts were set upon by a large force of Indians with "hierba" and driven back into their boats, leaving several of their companions dead on the shore.

The sailor thereupon revealed that he knew of another shelter some twenty-five miles beyond which the Admiral had also visited on the last voyage and named Puerto de los Bastimentos ("Supply Inlet") because the Indians had given him provisions there. On landing in the cove indicated and finding no enemies in sight, Nicuesa exclaimed with a sigh of relief:

"Let us stop here, in the name of God!"

Superstitious fellows, especially in moments of vexation and misfortune, the Spaniards took their commander's exclamation as an omen of good hope; they called the place forthwith "Nombre de Dios."

The Governor of Castile the Golden took possession of the region with all the ceremonies prescribed for such occasions, drawing his sword, cutting blades of grass, and carving crosses in the bark of the trees. Then without considering the weakness and the scanty provisions of his men he began building a stockade; for shortly the Indians discovered this new landing and began attacking the Spaniards with the same hostility they had shown at Belén.

Before long the situation at "Name of God" was as unendurable as elsewhere. The savages were destroying every field of corn, every vegetable garden, the colonists planted. The supplies brought from Santo Domingo had long since been exhausted. The Spaniards thought them-

selves fortunate if they came upon a toad or a snake; and not only serpents but crocodiles were used in the fight on famine. Nicuesa despatched a caravel to Hispaniola to bring fresh supplies of bread and pork, but the vessel was never heard of again. On some occasions everybody in the garrison would be sick at the same time and there would be no one to stand watch on the stockade at night. The slightest wound usually proved fatal through lack of medicines and proper food. Among men so desperate the sternest measures were necessary to maintain discipline. Nicuesa's gibbet cheated hunger, hierba, and disease of many victims. One day in reviewing the resources still at his disposal, the commander found that seven-eighths of his army had perished, leaving him perhaps a hundred spectres of skin and bone with which to complete his conquest. The Governor of Castile the Golden, heir to the Old Admiral's dreams of wealth, was left without one shred of hope. In his as in every mind the uppermost thought was that death might come as soon as possible to put an end to such misery.

But meantime a second romance was unfolding on the Mainland, its protagonists another group of Spaniards settled just a few miles distant from Nicuesa, the one party and the other remaining in ignorance of their respective misfortunes.

On reaching the open sea off Santo Domingo the Bachelor Enciso had indeed experienced the astonishment which Cuevas and his wife imagined of him in their many talks on the subject. Hardly had the land dropped from view when the Lord High Justice of New Andalusia was constrained to gasp as an apparition stalked into his official presence. The "Fencing Master," Vasco

Nuñez de Balboa, had kicked out the head of his barrel. He had come up from the hold and was offering his services to his involuntary commander! For the moment Enciso feigned anger at such trifling with his good faith. He rebuked the stowaway and vowed he would put him ashore on the first land the vessel made. But Balboa was a fine looking soldier. His jovial demeanor and the fact that by virtue of his voyages with Bastidas and Juan de la Cosa he had had greater experience in exploration and navigation than anyone aboard finally persuaded Enciso to accept him, despite the unusual manner of his enlistment, as a legitimate member of the expedition.

The vessel reached the Mainland in the bay where Juan de la Cosa had met his death. Memory of the terrible vengeance which Ojeda and Nicuesa had inflicted inclined the natives after a few gestures of hostility to come to terms with these invaders. The Bachelor proved also a tactful diplomat. Through one of his men who knew the Indian language he soon worked out arrangements whereby he could camp in peace on these inhospitable shores.

Enciso was just preparing to sail on from this port which had proved so disastrous to Ojeda, when to his astonishment a sail suddenly appeared on the horizon—a most unusual occurrence still in those all but deserted seas. It was a brigantine manned by white men; and as it drew nearer Enciso recognized the vessel as one which had set out from Santo Domingo with members of Ojeda's expedition. Characteristically suspicious as a man trained in the niceties of the law, he immediately concluded it might be a party of deserters. He had had

no news of his partner, Don Alonso, since the return of Isabel to Hispaniola. These men had probably abandoned the Government. But his plans for summary justice were laid aside when the captain of the brigantine came aboard and showed his papers. It was Francisco Pizarro, whom Ojeda had left in command at San Sebastian on sailing home, and who was to function as Acting Governor of New Andalusia during his absence.

The little brigantine held all the survivors of the abandoned city. After Ojeda had sailed away in the Genoese caravel stolen by the pirates, Pizarro stubbornly defended the town for the fifty days agreed upon with his chief. At the end of that period he decided to embark his men at once—it was impossible to occupy that site any longer. After the fifty days just seventy men were left of the hundreds who had set out from Santo Domingo with Ojeda. But small as it was such a force was much too large for the two little vessels at his disposal. Pizarro adopted in the emergency a measure characteristically resolute: he decided to wait where he was till other casualties and more deaths from disease had reduced his party to a size that would fit available accommodations! Four of the mares which had been brought along to be used in fighting the Indians and to make a beginning with breeding were still alive. Pizarro killed them, salted their flesh, and put the meat aboard with such other supplies as he could scrape together. He took one brigantine himself, and gave command of the other to a man named Valenzuela, one of his intimates.

Scarcely had the little vessels left the shelter at San Sebastian than a great tornado blew up. Valenzuela's boat foundered during the first onset, while Pizarro and

his men stood looking on, powerless to give aid. Some of the men averred that they had seen an enormous whale, or some other marine monster, rise in the water under the vessel and literally crush the hull with a tremendous blow from its tail. Pizarro himself successfully rode out the storm, and when it abated, made his way toward the harbor in front of Yurbaco on the lookout for provisions. There he found the Bachelor Enciso.

Pizarro and his men were eager to continue on their return to Santo Domingo. They preferred a perilous voyage in a leaky craft to any more experiences such as they had been through at San Sebastian. But that was not Enciso's idea at all. He had risked his whole fortune in the enterprise to win a nomination as Lord High Justice of New Andalusia. He was not going to miss his first opportunity to exercise the authority vested in him. He served notice on Pizarro and the latter's men that since Governor Ojeda had returned to Santo Domingo, the command devolved upon him as second in authority. He ordered Pizarro to return to the scene of his recent misfortunes with all his bedraggled colonists.

But Enciso's misadventures began off the same shores which had proved so disastrous to Ojeda. His ship went aground and broke to pieces on a shoal and he and his crew just managed to escape with their lives to Pizarro's little brigantine. The Bachelor had spent every penny he owned in the world on mares, pigs, provisions, weapons, gunpowder, for his colony. Now all he had left was a few boxes of hardtack and a few heads of cheese. In less than an hour's time he saw years of quarrelsome practice as a lawyer at the bar vanish in that hungry ocean of romance and adventure!



But worse was to come. When the brigantine reëntered the cove at San Sebastian the Spaniards found that the buildings, the block-house, the stockade which they had left, had turned to ashes: the Indians had entered the town and burned everything. Nevertheless, Enciso ordered all hands ashore; and the old fight for berries, manioc, wild corn, and small game began again against the swarms of Indians armed with poisoned arrows. Enciso had come on from Haiti with the idea of mounting the bench in a pompous court of justice. He did not know what to do in the situation now before him. If he had one clear idea it was to get safely home as soon as possible from these shores which were a charnel house of white men.

This was the moment for Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, the fugitive debtor whom Enciso had thought of landing on a desert island, to come forward and assert himself. Nine years before, on the voyage with Bastidas, Vasco Nuñez had visited every inlet along this coast. He remembered that across the Gulf of Urabá, on the banks of a river which the natives called Darién, there dwelt an Indian tribe possessed of great quantities of gold and a lucrative agriculture. They were as hostile to the whites as those about San Sebastian; but they did not know the art of poisoning their arrows. He, Balboa, if everyone agreed, would lead the expedition to that land of promise!

Once more the weary Spaniards went aboard Pizarro's leaky brigantine and set sail for the Rio Darién to take possession of the rich Indian town which Enciso was already planning to make the capital of his government.

The chief of the natives at the point in question was an Indian named Cemaco, and he met the Spaniards at



the head of a force of five hundred braves. The lawyer, freshly turned captain-at-arms, perceived that the combat would be a bitter one with chances of success or failure about even. The little vessel was in no condition to sail to Santo Domingo, let alone to bring reinforcements. With the sea closed behind them the Spaniards saw they had to establish themselves on the Darién or perish.

Enciso and most of his soldiers came from Andalusia, the majority in fact from Seville itself. They thought they might gain the miraculous favor of the Virgin worshipped in that city if they gave Her name to the colony they were about to found. Calling upon "Our Lady of the Old Church" (*Nuestra Señora de la Antigua*) they rowed ashore, and set upon Cemaco's army with such impetuosity that the Indians fled in rout, leaving the ground strewn with their dead. Enciso, hitherto bachelor-at-law and browser of worm-eaten geographies, now suddenly found himself a victorious general! He led his men proudly into the Indian capital near by and captured there not only supplies in abundance but great quantities of gold and pearls. The booty amounted, according to his estimate, to something like ten thousand castellians or more than fifty-five thousand modern dollars. Never had the unlucky Ojeda in all his adventures come upon a treasure trove so rich, nor had any of his miserable companions known such a stroke of fortune in a land which had brought them nothing but hunger and despair.

The village was duly baptized as "Santa Maria de la Antigua del Darién." And the name "worked," beyond the Spaniards' fondest hopes: the town was to prove the

first permanent establishment of white men on the mainland of the Americas, and to become in the end a city of wealth and power. Enciso straightway began to function as Lord High Justice of New Anadalusia, lieutenant meantime to His Excellency Governor Don Alonso de Ojeda, absent on duty elsewhere.

But such balm to vanity won in a day of fighting was nothing in comparison to the prestige that came to a subordinate. Balboa, known as plain Vasco Nuñez to his comrades in arms, had been the man who brought the Spaniards to the scene of their first fruitful victory. He had fought like a demon in the battle. His experience as an explorer of old was known to everyone. He had, besides, many of Ojeda's personal charms. Bold and resourceful in the hour of danger he threw his money away in the hour of success, distributing his own shares of the booty freely among his comrades. Balboa harbored some rancor against the Bachelor for the rebukes and other disciplinary measures which had been inflicted upon him when he crept forth from his barrel. Ambition also doubtless played a part in the plan he now conceived for succeeding the lawyer in command of the expedition.

To his other aptitudes he added a shrewd mind and remarkable gifts of expression, and meeting Enciso on the latter's ground of quibbles and points of law, he shortly found a weak point in the pretensions of the Lord High Justice to the post of Acting Governor. According to the Royal Charter the boundary between the governments of Ojeda and Nicuesa was the Rio Darién flowing into the Gulf of Urabá. Now as luck would have it the town of Santa Maria de la Antigua was rising on the west bank of the stream, beyond ques-

tion therefore in the territory of Nicuesa. On this ground, Balboa pointed out, the Lord High Justice of New Andalusia as lieutenant to Don Alonso de Ojeda, could have status only as a usurper, since his pretended domain lay outside the boundaries of Ojeda's territory. Most of the Spanish soldiers were inclined to dislike Enciso because of his pompous ways, and, with the assistance of a few men as bold as himself, Balboa had little difficulty in deposing him.

The new colony was now organized as a free municipality—a little self-governed republic, recognizing indeed the suzerainty of the distant King of Spain, but otherwise independent. The soldiers decided to have three civil governors with title as *alcaldes*. Vasco Nuñez de Balboa received most of the votes; the two men next in favor were a certain Zumodio and another Spaniard named Valdivia. Military necessities soon showed the need of a supreme command. Some of the colonists wanted Balboa, but others had grown envious of his sudden rise to power. A few besides, sympathizers with Enciso, began talking of Nicuesa, who really held the legal title to these lands by virtue of his grant from the King.

At this juncture a Spanish *armadilla* appeared off Darién under command of one Rodriquez de Colmarnes, who was exploring the coast in search of Nicuesa. Colmarnes was a great friend of the Governor of Castile the Golden. He convinced the colonists that since they were occupying Nicuesa's territory it was their duty to submit to Nicuesa's authority. And he gladly offered his own vessels to take two envoys from the new settlement

to the unhappy rival of Don Alonso that they might offer him the command.

Nicuesa and the survivors of his expedition were virtually at the point of death in their stockade at Nombre de Dios when the squadron of Colmarnes suddenly hove in view. Colmarnes reported that the remnants of Ojeda's party had entered the territory of Castile the Golden and founded an important city—such at that moment "Our Lady of the Old Church" seemed to everyone because of the booty that had been garnered in the fighting with the Indians. Don Diego de Nicuesa was very like Don Alonso de Ojeda in the ease with which he could forget past misfortunes and recover his innate arrogance as a leader of men. His first act on receiving this joyful news was to commandeer provisions from the fleet newly arrived and spread a banquet in the blockhouse at "Name of God" which had been the witness of so much tragedy. He thought it his duty to entertain the envoys from the free city on the Darién with the sumptuousness of a prince. With a square meal at last to his credit and more wine perhaps than was good for him, he began to talk in language that had been familiar on his lips in the days of his residence at court in Spain. He genially promised his influence and protection to all about him; but at the same time he caused some alarm by threatening confiscations and punishments the moment he should take possession. To make matters worse on learning of the rich haul in gold that had been made in the capital of the chief, Cemaco—it had been already divided among the conquerors of that village—he declared the winnings would have to be handed over to him that a new division might be made.

Meantime Lopez de Olano, and the four deserters who had stolen the boat on the island off Veragua, were lying in chains at Nombre de Dios awaiting execution. The prisoners got secret word to the commissioners from Darién warning them that they were making a great mistake in taking Nicuesa to their town since he was a grasping cruel man and would surely deprive them of the prosperity they were enjoying. The envoys managed to slip away before Nicuesa was ready to depart and reached Antigua in time to inform their comrades of the Governor's intentions and to arouse a noisy animosity against him.

Vasco Nuñez had thought it his better policy to feign acquiescence in the move favorable to Don Diego de Nicuesa. He now saw that an opportunity was at hand to ruin the Royal Governor. When Nicuesa appeared before the town a mob of colonists gathered on the shore to prevent his landing, and demanded that he return to Nombre de Dios forthwith. The Governor was seized with such terror at the thought of his past privations that he offered to surrender all his prerogatives provided he could be received in the prosperous town before him, if not as commander, then as a simple comrade. But his petitions were scornfully rejected, and when, nevertheless, the unhappy man insisted on coming ashore he was arrested, thrown into chains, and brought to trial before a popular assembly.

Having been acclaimed commander in succession to Nicuesa by a unanimous choice of the colony, Balboa was inclined to mercy. But the assembly was inexorable. Nicuesa should not be allowed to remain on the mainland. He would have to return to Santo Domingo—but

in the least serviceable of the boats still in the possession of the colonists, Pizarro's miserable brigantine, already unseaworthy from shipworm, and with hardly any provisions at all! Seventeen loyal comrades volunteered to accompany him in this hazardous exile.

On the first day of March in the year 1511 the Governor of Castile the Golden ventured forth in his sinking craft into the perils of the Ocean. He was never heard of again. Somewhere out on the Sea of Caribs his ship went down and not even a bit of wreckage was ever found to reveal how or where he met his end.



## CHAPTER IV

### LIKE A LION!

When, months afterwards, Don Alonso de Ojeda learned of the unhappy fate to which his former rival and sometime friend had come, he spoke of it in a tone of cold resignation:

"We two were boys together back in Spain and a gypsy woman predicted that he was going to die at sea . . . and that I was going to die of starvation!"

And that was the end of it so far as he was concerned. He seemed to dismiss the matter from his mind, even the dire augury about himself. What could death matter to him now? He had walked through most of his life arm in arm with Death! Besides, other episodes pendant on these various adventures upon the unknown Mainland to the West came to complicate his already painful situation as well as to engross public interest in the capital of Hispaniola.

When the Viceroy learned that the pirate Talavera and the survivors of the latter's crew of bandits were living peacefully on the island of Jamaica, he sent a vessel with a detachment of soldiers to arrest them and bring them back to Santo Domingo. He was determined to punish them for the seizure of the Genoese merchantman and the murder of some of its crew. Don Alonso was called to testify at the trial as to what he knew of the

misdeeds of Talavera—the first pirate to appear on what was later to be called the Spanish Main. The penniless hero refrained from any mention of the abuses they had inflicted on him personally:

“Why should I bring that up?” he said. “Whether I complain or not they will receive the punishment they deserve! Yet I am sorry for them! We were together there in that swamp in Cuba! I doubt whether human beings ever went through so much suffering just to get themselves hanged!”

And Don Alonso was right. Talavera was executed at Santo Domingo with the men who had joined him in his act of piracy. He had many friends about the “Four Corners” however, disreputable rascals like himself, who tried to rehabilitate his memory as best they could by describing him as an innocent man who had come to the gallows through the betrayal of Don Alonso de Ojeda.

Few the habitués of the resorts in town who had not at some time been offended by Don Alonso’s haughtiness toward all who ventured to approach him familiarly during his infrequent appearances in the city. The accusations of treachery gained ground. It was evident that he had lost much of the physical stamina that had made him famous in other days. He was limping visibly from the wound in his knee. His health in general seemed to have been subtly undermined by the “hierba” which he had treated with such a barbarous cure. Where, at any rate, was the Don Alonso who had never lost a drop of blood in combat, who never allowed an antagonist to escape unhurt? Since his return from the Mainland he had been dispensing with the protection of his miraculous Virgin. As everybody knew it was She who had saved his skin in

the battles of the old days! Now anyone could take liberties with him!

Late one afternoon Don Alonso had occasion to go to town, and it was dark night before he set out on his way back to the cabin where he was living with Isabel, his faithful Indian squaw, and the three little halfbreeds whom she had brought him. Suddenly he found himself attacked by not less than a dozen of Talavera's avengers.

But those who imagined his day as a fencer was done were much mistaken. As quick of thought and action as he had ever been, he reached a wall, backed against it to prevent assault from behind, and unsheathed his sword. The band of assassins found the crippled hero the multiple antagonist he had seemed to be in his palmiest youth. Everyone of them had a whole Ojeda to deal with. Four, eight, a dozen, and yet there he was parrying every thrust, answering every blow with a counter, every lunge of his sword making its mark! One by one his assailants fell back wounded or bruised; and when finally they turned in frank flight Don Alonso was upon their heels, pursuing them along the road for a great distance, cutting down every straggler who dropped behind. The last victory of the Knight of the Virgin!

When the combat was over he wiped his dripping sword on the leaves of a shrub, resumed his walk toward his cabin, opened the door, took off his cape, lighted a rustic lamp that burned with a wick fixed in coconut oil, sat down at a table, and taking up a hawk's quill pen began writing in a big paper copybook wherein half the pages already were covered with crowded reddish lines.

To while away the dull hours of his decline, Don Alonso de Ojeda was composing a history of his life.

He loved these quiet hours of the night when he felt entirely free from contact with the humanity he despised. Day by day his disgust with his former comrades in arms increased. He hated them all alike, whether for their indifference or for the very compassion they had of him. To raise money from the few possessions he still controlled he would sometimes have to go into town; but he would always assume a demeanor of aloofness or contempt toward any of his old friends who seemed inclined to approach him. Night with its hours of quiet, of cool, was the time best suited for his magical resurrections of the past; and he would sit there in his miserable cabin, the only home he could count on earth, down into the early hours of the morning, relating his achievements at arms, his duels, his voyages, his wars—first with the Moors, then with the Indians on these shores of eastern Asia—for no sailor, no geographer, had yet established the true nature of the new lands.

Not a man of much learning, Don Alonso had read a few books during his school days—works of history for the most part, lent him by his cousin the Grand Inquisitor, and other scholars of his family's acquaintance. Caesar's Commentaries he had studied carefully, and most of the narratives of famous captains who had thought of telling the story of their campaigns in days of retirement from war. His unfortunate comrade, Juan de la Cosa, and most of the other Spanish sailors he had known, had lived lives entirely absorbed in action. They had done truly great things, but left them to the chance remembrance of their fellows, making no written record of them, themselves. The Florentine, Amerigo Vespucci, sometime clerk in a spice store at Seville, was the only

one who had taken the trouble to write down what he had seen (often reporting what he had heard as though he had seen it). Vespucci had made his first voyage as Ojeda's apprentice, but now, by virtue of pen rather than of sword, his name was beginning to be famous in the world.

The gloomy Knight of the Virgin was taking great pains to recover and rearrange the crowded memories of his short but tumultuous life. He would sit at his table for hours without writing, his hawk-like face uplifted toward the thatched roof of his cabin and catching from time to time some tropical insect which would lose its hold up there and fall. At moments of perplexity in style or vagueness in recollection, he would bite desperately at the feather of his quill—one of those pens which the friars at the Convent of Saint Francis made so cleverly and were glad to give him on his occasional visits to their retreat.

And as he sat there lost in meditation, the four copper-skinned faces that were his every possession on earth would be turned in silent gaze upon the dread white chief and the mysterious movements of his hand. Isabel would prepare the miserable supper the family could afford and then take a seat on the floor of beaten earth, her elbows on her knees, her lower jaw resting in her joined hands, her blazing eyes fixed upon this warrior whose courage in combat had won her heart in days long past, and who had been ever since her lover, her man, her master. Three halfbreed boys of different heights would take their seats in hushed awe at her side, throw their arms about their knees and sit looking up at the great man in the same admiring silence. They were



half naked like their mother. In the dim light of the cabin their dark skins would glow with a strange phosphorescence. They were little wild animals whipped into domesticity and looking out in timid amazement upon the world through eyes steeped in mystery.

Just so! After a stormy life marked with ups and downs of fortune, the famous hidalgo, Don Alonso de Ojeda, found himself possessed of a mortgaged cabin and a mortgaged plot of ground, with one Indian squaw and three halfbreed cubs. And at twenty he had dreamed of becoming a great lord in the new lands, one of the potentates ruling as king in the vassalage of the King of Kings!

This half-Indian family was always about him, ever ready to do his bidding—if there was anything at all for him to eat it was thanks, on most days, to this wife he had taken from another race! And yet he felt so far removed from all of them! In the first years of his relation with Isabel he had sensed in these sons, mixed of lineage yet flesh of his flesh, that exotic charm which the white man often finds in the children of races he calls inferior. But as they grew older, as their lines filled out and they came to look more like men of his own species, they seemed to draw apart from him. They were more respectful, more obedient, more cringing even, before this parent of divine descent—but they were much less communicative. Don Alonso knew he was more feared than loved! As for Isabel, poverty and privation seemed to make her uglier every day. Gone that luxuriant freshness of rounded muscles, that soft velvety skin that had the glisten of polished ivory! Gone that glory of mystic womanhood which had first dazzled him in the savage



beauty of Queen Gold Flower! Hard work, hunger, who could say—sorrow perhaps, had given Isabel the dry bony half-bestial repulsiveness of a beast of burden overworked and under-fed. Isabel he had named her, thinking of that other Isabel, a beautiful phantom still gliding in luminous transparency through fanciful memories of his lost youth.

The silence and aloofness of his wife and children gradually caused him all but to forget them. They would sit there for hours in his presence without reminding him once of their existence. For their part they found something dreadfully portentous in what the "Son of Heaven" was doing there at the table with such assiduous application! What could be the meaning of all those strange marks he was making on the sheets of white? Every white man, they had observed, sometimes did the same thing! It must be some magic art known only to those who dwelt in "Turey"! When the hidalgo would be away from home and the squaw would be free to turn to her housework, she was careful never to touch the growing pile of talismans left there by her terrible lord! That copybook reigned over the table and over the cabin like a fetish exhaling miraculous effluvia! And Isabel's reverence was imparted to her children with cries and blows whenever the little ones, their curiosity more uncontrolled, would try to investigate the mysterious documents.

From time to time Don Alonso would encounter his old friend Cuevas during visits to town. Fernando really was guilty of but one offense: at his wife's insistence he had declined to risk the property he had in a new voyage to the Mainland westward! Facts were daily demonstrat-

ing the wisdom of that refusal; but Don Alonso was unable to recognize any opinion contrary to his own, and he thought of Cuevas as little better than his worst enemy. Disappointments had embittered him toward everyone. He was unjust in all his judgments of men. He loved no one; he had lost faith in gratitude and friendship; and a jealousy of which he was probably not aware inspired him to hate especially anyone who seemed happy and content with life. That Cuevas had refrained from a new adventure could be forgiven! But to be satisfied with a modest fortune! To be surrounded in his advancing years with a family of his own race, so different from the flock of halfbreeds that greeted Don Alonso every night when he returned to his cabin! That was too much!

Observing the growing poverty of his former captain, Fernando would timidly suggest loans of money, or even propose that Don Alonso come and live with him on the farm. But that was a mortal offense! He would suddenly find himself confronted by the old hidalgo, governor by Royal Grant of the province of New Andalusia!

“My affairs could not be going better!” Don Alonso would reply arrogantly. “My friends at court are working for me—soon justice will be done! I am expecting the arrival any day of papers instructing Don Diego Colon to supply me with men and boats to return to my Government.”

What angered him especially was the news that came drifting in from time to time of the growing prosperity of the man Balboa, that fencing master whom he had refused to admit to his expedition! By popular acclaim Vasco Nuñez was now Governor of Castile the Golden in

succession to Nicuesa. Indeed, the "Free Municipality of Darién" had laid claim as well to the province of New Andalusia! The two domains comprised in the joint charter of Ojeda and Nicuesa had now been combined *de facto* into one! The efforts of the two friends and rivals were to serve in the end for the fortune of an adventurer who had sailed out to meet his glory headed into a water cask!

Yet at times, in moments of calmer thought, Ojeda could accept his tremendous fiasco in more cheerful resignation. He had come to these eastern shores of Asia a generation too soon, when the work of discovery and exploration had still to be done. The moment was not yet ripe for conquests inland. He, furthermore, was a man of the sword and not a man of the sea. It was only natural that the opportunity for glory and wealth should come rather to men younger than he, men whom he could proudly regard as his pupils. Balboa, whom he had despised because of an instinctive jealousy unconfessed, was getting rich in lands which he, Ojeda, had discovered and which belonged by Royal patent to him! Others of his admirers in this generation—now the third of the Discovery—might have equal fortune: Hernan Cortés for instance who was now busy conquering Cuba with Diego Velasquez; or that Francisco Pizarro, his lieutenant at San Sebastian, who was staying on in Darién in the following of Vasco Nuñez. They, some day, might win the gold and the fame which he had dreamed of in his twenties while listening to the stories the elder Columbus could tell so well about the lands of the Grand Khan visited by Marco Polo!

Cuevas could not help remarking the ravages which

poverty and disease were making in Don Alonso's physique. The captain was limping more and more as time went on; his face, always lean, was acquiring a strangely corpse-like pallor. His eyes, on the other hand, had lost none of their fire! If anything they seemed to gleam with a fiercer light under the very lash of his fever. Don Alonso reminded Fernando of the lions which Their Highnesses had brought from Africa when he was a boy to display in cages in the royal gardens before the wondering eyes of the throngs. Those proud majestic animals pined away in sheer despondency as though disgraced by their captivity! But if they were to die they would do so with their backs turned in contempt on men, refusing food, refusing attentions, creeping off into the darkest corners of their prisons where some morning they would be found dead. So the Knight of the Virgin would leave this world!

Don Alonso would never tolerate offers of help from soldiers, especially. He would answer sarcastically when someone would advise him to appeal for aid to the younger Columbus, governor of the island; or he would talk with tranquil flippancy of great plans under way in Spain, deceptions which could only make his hearers smile. They would smile, but never in the presence of the sometime Governor of New Andalusia who was bitterer and more quarrelsome than he had ever been, and was ready to bare his blade regardless of the number of possible antagonists. Don Alonso de Ojeda seemed determined to die killing!

The only connection that seemed to be at all congenial to Don Alonso in his present worries and temper was his friendship with the friars at the Convent of Saint

Francis. Some of the monks there had accompanied him on his expedition. Others had come to the island in the early days of the colony and still remembered his feats, especially the capture of Caonabo. Despite the passing years and so many new voyages fraught with tragic or heroic adventure, that incident still remained something extraordinary in the history of the New World! Aware of his pride and at the same time of his dire poverty, the friars would invite him on one pretext or another to share their meals at the convent; or they would load him down with delicacies raised on their lands or procured from beyond the sea as ships would come in from Spain and furnished occasion for unusual banquets.

But then suddenly it dawned on the haughty captain that he was receiving a veiled alms from the Franciscans. He ceased his visits to their monastery, compelling them to come to him and insist that he not forget them. The cheerful quiet of the convent, a structure recently built; the fragrant solitudes of the garden beautified by the first orange trees imported from Europe; the affable story-telling of these monks who were also heroes in their way and had followed the Conquistadores in their advances into the New World to preach the Word of God and died as others died crushed by the war clubs of the Indians or pierced through and through with "hierba," began to exert a soothing influence on this sometime chieftain so weary of the world.

Don Alonso was feeling that mystic yearning which came to many rough and daring men of those days at the end of lives led in abundant sin and cruel warfare. He thought of becoming a friar. His wife Isabel and the



halfbreed children she had borne him created no obstacle in his eyes. The rules and regulations of religion applied, so far as he could see, only to the whites. He need have no remorse on abandoning such an unnatural family! God would ask an account of him only for his conduct toward "rational" beings! He began passing whole days at the convent, sometimes praying in the chapel, at other times walking about the cloisters in company with the friars who had divined his state of mind and were gently impelling him by suggestive smiles and words of tender affection to continue along the path into which they themselves had turned years before.

But then suddenly the soldier seemed to awaken to the absurdity, or rather to the impossibility, that he should ever take to religion. Complete surrender to God would compel him to part with something more precious to him, more intimately bound up with his being, than the dubious family he had reared. He would have to give up his sword, that sword which had hung at his left side from the earliest days of his boyhood and which had followed him from his first encounters with the Moors to his last battles with savages or bandits in the New World! Humble he could be; but such a sacrifice was beyond his capacities for abnegation. After so many misfortunes the renunciation of his sword seemed to him the greatest and most overwhelming that could be asked of him! Far rather die! And as the thought came to him he drew the blade forth from its sheath, which was hanging on his chair, and kissed it many times as though imploring forgiveness of an injured comrade. He was like a lover repenting in impassioned caresses of some fugitive fancy of infidelity!



His mind was dwelling more and more on death, feeling it to be near at hand. But he looked upon the grim Reaper as an old acquaintance, rather troublesome to have about, but well known after all and incapable of inspiring the slightest fear. He began to think of his poverty now as something of which he might be proud. The more profoundly people misunderstood him, the deeper their ingratitude, the greater he appeared in his own eyes. Since he could not devote himself to God as a man of religion, he would bow to God's will with a resignation and a humility worthy of the saints.

His friends the monks would try to cheer him when he spoke of his imminent passing from the scene:

"Why, Governor, Your Grace is destined to live many years yet!"

And he would thrill with satisfaction at hearing a title so pregnant with past dreams, and that formula of present courtesy, on the lips of these men who were half deliberately proffering this simple balm to his spirit. Not that he gave much weight to their prophecies as to his physical welfare! He continued talking of death. He even expressed a wish to be buried in the convent church with an epitaph which he himself had devised:

"Here lieth Alonso de Ojeda the Unfortunate."

Then it occurred to him that this posthumous assertion of his disappointment in the world could be only a futile boast, a protest of pride striving to perpetuate itself forever. God could not look with approval on such arrogance of the flesh! He had to be humbler, much, much humbler before the Mystery of the Divine Plan!

He was unable finally to continue his walks to the Convent of Saint Francis. One morning he could not even

leave his bed. The wounded leg had suddenly refused to work! He was paralyzed! And his strength failed rapidly thereafter. A strange mania was now aggravating the condition of the unhappy hero. He was refusing to eat. For that matter, his family had been living very precariously for some time. Isabel had of late been working in the houses of wealthy people in town. Then at times when such employment could not be found she would go stealthily to the friends Ojeda still had and beg a few handfuls of corn, a pan of cassaba bread, that her lord, his children, and she herself, might eat.

"But don't let the Little White Chief know," she would say, affrighted.

She still had reason to fear that unbending pride, that furious temper! The captain could knowingly tolerate only such gifts as the friars brought, and they had to offer them with the greatest circumspection. Finally Isabel had turned to Lucero and Fernando, at a time when they had returned to their farm near the city, and for some days extraordinary abundance brightened the cabin of the forgotten Conquistador. Learning that Don Alonso was now helpless in bed the friars could not be prevented from sending a daily basket of victuals always accompanied with some thoughtful inquiry as to his health. Still—the dying cavalier refused to eat!

"I must die of starvation!" Isabel heard him say during an access of fever. "Niquesa died at sea! I must starve! Let our destinies be fulfilled!"

He had instructed his concubine not to receive visits from any of his former comrades. Cuevas knew that that command, like all the captain's orders, would be carried out inflexibly. He refrained, accordingly, from enter-

ing the cabin, though he went there often in quest of news. On other days one or another of Ojeda's little mestizos would run to the Cuevas farm to report on the Little White Chief's condition and to carry back a basket of vegetables.

It was Isabel herself who came at last one morning. Fernando and his wife understood at a glance that the great adventurer was dead. The squaw had tip-toed to his bedside an hour earlier. There he lay, motionless, cold, his blanket drawn over him, his face turned to the wall.

"Just like a lion!" thought Fernando.

Hurrying to the habitation of death, Cuevas found the friars of Saint Francis already preparing the hero's body for transport to the convent church. Among the papers he had left on his table one related in particular to his burial, and the Franciscans were inclined to respect his wishes to the letter. After trying one thing and another Don Alonso had found a satisfactory formula of humility to adorn his last resting place. Names would not do! Titles would not do! It would not do to boast of his misfortunes! To proclaim the ingratitude of men was of itself an act of vanity! Better rather to slip away from life in modest silence, forget oneself, forget even one's name, drop away into nothingness! A slab of stone without any inscription at all! Such the fitting cover for his sepulcher! And that quarrelsome provocative hidalgo who had caused the blood of other men to flow in streams, incapable of tolerating a remote suggestion of offense, boastful and threatening even in the darkest hours of his misfortune, willed that his body be buried in the door-

way of the Church of Saint Francis as a perpetual expiation of his past pride:

“ . . . that all,” so the testament ran, “that all who enter the church, be they big or little, great or humble, find themselves obliged to trample underfoot all that remains of this great sinner.”

## CHAPTER V

### THE RUINS OF ISABELLA

Cuevas took Don Alonso's family straightway under his protection and the three little halfbreeds began to pass long days on his farm following the vigorous Alonsico about in his war-like games and obeying him as though they were his born servants. The squaw Isabel could only look with pleasure upon this good company her sons were keeping. Besides, in view of their capers and the noise they made, she was glad, on the whole, to be rid of them. Now that the Little White Chief had disappeared, the three little mestizos were showing all the unruliness of slaves set free. There was no one they needed to fear in the cabin now! And as a visible declaration of independence, their first act had been to tear to bits the pile of papers on which their father had been making all those magical scrawls for so long a time! Such the end of the "Commentaries" of one of the first discoverers of the New World—the personal memoirs of Don Alonso de Ojeda, Servant and Messenger to Their Highnesses, sometime Governor of Coquibaboa and thereafter Governor of New Andalusia! One day when Cuevas visited the cottage all he could find of the work was a few pieces of torn paper blowing about in the yard.

The Indian squaw refused to desert the humble bohio where she had lived with her much worshipped lord dur-

ing his last years. She seemed to feel that the hero would somehow be alive so long as she continued to occupy his earthly habitation. Only when she was driven from it would she admit at last that the invincible warrior was really dead. She had not wept at her husband's bier. With a stoicism characteristic of her race, she would sit gazing upon his corpse, her dry eyes fixed in a stare of bewildered astonishment. Astonishment indeed, and not grief! Was her master not a god come from Turey? How then could he ever die? The chieftain whom she had seen invulnerable in combat she had come to believe invulnerable also to the shafts of Death! Curious as a woman would be, Lucero tried to engage the squaw in conversation to discover just what the feelings of this wife from another race might be toward her Spanish husband. It was hard for the Indian to express herself. She would shake her head sadly and then, pressed by the questions of her Spanish friend, she would say tersely:

"White Chief in heaven with his Virgin! Soon I go find him! You take my babies!"

This last request was indeed not necessary. Cuevas was caring as tenderly for these human relics of his former chief as he was of his own son. He had applied himself to settling the estate of the unfortunate hero and at once found himself involved with half the population of lawyers and notaries who had come from across the sea and settled on the Island of Hispaniola like a flock of vultures. He also paid a call on the Boy Admiral. To tell the truth he and Lucero were somewhat hurt at the forgetfulness and indifference of this great personage whom they had tended as a child at the Convent of La Rabida. Don Diego had never taken any notice of them.



He preferred apparently not to be reminded of the trials and tribulations of his infancy.

But after going to some pains Fernando finally came to know the extent of the fortune left by Don Alonso and probably with more exactness than that careless spend-thrift adventurer, always sunk deep in debt, had ever known himself. Of the thirty square miles or more of land which the Sovereigns had assigned to Don Alonso on the South Coast of Hispaniola nothing at all was left. Those properties had been foreclosed by creditors years before. It was futile to think of recovering them from the tenacious claws of their present holders. But Cuevas finally came across some deeds to lands located on the North Coast near the site of the old city of Isabella—lands which Don Cristobal had made over to the captain in appreciation of his heroism, and which Don Alonso seemed thereafter to have forgotten. Here was something to look into! Fernando felt called upon to undertake a journey to the North.

It was a matter of some fifty leagues, to be traversed over miserable trails with stopping places only at Indian villages. However the island had known no trouble since the cruel repressions with which the former governor, Ovando, had chastized the last insurrections of the natives. A Spaniard could now go from one end of the island to the other completely alone without fearing the slightest annoyance from Indians.

Fernando made the journey with a Spaniard whom he had taken as partner in some of his agricultural enterprises. They travelled on two of those light-footed well-broken horses sprung from the fertile line of war-steeds brought over by Columbus on his Second Voyage and

which could now be called native to the island. Horses indeed were very numerous on the fertile plains. Since none of them were ever killed for food, there was as yet no limit to their reproduction. Both the travellers carried cross-bows, with the intention of living off the land along the route. Firearms were still too unwieldy to be generally used by private citizens. The hand artillery of those days—"artillery" it was indeed—so heavy to move about, so slow in reloading, was not to be compared for serviceability with the light and sure-firing ballesta.

Fernando and his friend lodged in the villages of a number of native chiefs, all peacefully inclined, who welcomed them with great demonstrations of courtesy, and finally they reached the lands of the late King Guahanacari, within whose domains Cuevas and Lucero had witnessed the founding of the tragic settlement of Nativity on Columbus's First Voyage and, a year later, of the walled town of Isabella. More than fifteen years had passed since Cuevas and his wife had left this part of the island for the new province of Santo Domingo; yet Cuevas could remember every detail along these shores which had harbored the two first centers of European civilization in the New World. Following the data he had copied from Don Alonso's papers he had no great difficulty in locating the lands bestowed upon him by the Old Admiral. Nothing much, after all—swamp lands along the banks of a stream, covered with a thick wilderness! There were some valuable trees—but what could one do with them? What white men ever came to exploit these riches, so remote from the new capital of the island?

A funereal silence had settled on these regions which

the first Spanish sailors had thought an earthly Paradise. Even the natives seemed to have fled from the lands once ruled by Guahanacari. As he roamed about the coast the only human beings Cuevas saw were a few Spaniards who probably had special reasons for keeping at safe distances from the authorities at Santo Domingo. They were living in native style practicing a crude agriculture on such land as they found naturally clear of trees and underbrush. A mere handful of Indians still remained on the North Shore faithful to the soil worked by their ancestors.

None of the people he encountered, whether whites or Indians, ever approached the ruins of Isabella. These were said to be haunted by terrifying phantoms. Some asserted they themselves had heard hair-raising cries coming from invisible multitudes. Others said they had seen lights about the ruins at night—undoubtedly souls of those hundreds of Spaniards who had died of hunger and disease in the ill-fated town!

Cuevas was not so superstitious. He took frequent walks about the enclosure within which he and his wife had built their first house and seen their son, the first white child born in the Western Hemisphere, come into the world. The old wall built to keep off the attacks of Caonabo was still standing. Blocks of stone had fallen from position here and there. The rest of the masonry was overgrown with a thick coating of climbing plants which made it look like a great square hedge of green. The ruins of the buildings had likewise been smothered under the sylvan exuberance of the tropics. The walls of the stone houses were still standing, but most of the roofs had fallen in, leaving only here and there a sketch of bare

rafters. The locations of the wooden cottages were sometimes suggested by the strange shapes of the clumps of vegetation which had adapted their forms to wooden structures long since vanished. For similar reasons it was possible to trace the old network of streets, which now were regular lines of meadow, the grass in them reaching to Fernando's waist.

Cuevas identified the site of his own dwelling, the ruins of the Admiral's house, and the residences of other officials in the colony. He did not venture to tread the rock-strewn ground within. The snake is an animal with domestic instincts; he prefers the ruins of homes that men have left to his native hiding-places in the wilderness! Bands of monkeys and flocks of parrots, which had come to fill this abundant solitude with noisy chattering, enabled Cuevas to understand the terrifying cries that were sometimes heard by visitors to the neighborhood. Indeed there were so many animals about that interest in the hunt rather than any yearnings to live in the dead past again, impelled Cuevas to loiter much among the stones of Isabella. The woods were literally full of hogs, descendants of the sows Columbus had brought on his Second Voyage and which had turned wild and multiplied astonishingly in the free life of the Haitian forest. Hardly a day went by but Fernando and his companion captured some specimen of this toothsome game, carrying the booty slung on a pole back to their encampment where they would feast off the juicier parts of the animal's flesh and give the rest of the carcass to the Indians. No such game as this could be found in the woods on the South Coast where growth of population was already driving the wilderness inland. Cuevas

was inclined to let day after day go by before he set out on his return journey.

One day, however, thought of the fever that had proved so deadly to the first Spaniards in the region counselled prudence: he seemed to feel a chill coming on and other symptoms of incipient illness which he remembered in comrades of the first settlement who had died years before and whose bones were now lying under the tangled vegetation beneath his feet. It was late in the afternoon. He had decided to set out along the trails to the South early the following morning. But he could not bring himself to leave these spots so vivid and even so dear in his memory without one last glance at the dead streets of Isabella. He was quite alone, his companion had stayed behind in the Indian camp some distance away, where they had been lodging, watching the last turns on the spit of a wild pig they had caught that morning. As Cuevas turned toward the ruins one of the dogs came running after him eager for a hunt, but at the lichen-coated wall about the old town, the dog stopped, pricked up his ears, allowed his master to go ahead, and finally began to howl lugubriously.

Fernando strode through the breach in the wall which in days gone by had served as town gate and, his cross-bow on his shoulder, made his way along the meadow which had once been the Calle Mayor. He had reached the ruins of the church when suddenly he stopped with a shiver of fear. Was he dreaming? Had the delirium of the fever already assailed him? He sank to a seat on a nearby stone and gazed in terror toward the ruins in front of him.

There they were: two lines of men, dressed like friars,



crossing what had been the threshold of the church! The whole brotherhood of a convent, it seemed, filing in to mass!

Yet, what a noble gentry! *Hidalgos* "of the tight cape" as the colonists called the Spaniards who hailed from Court, leaving prosperous stations in the Old World to seek greater fortunes in the New. Well dressed to a man, with swords at their belts, rich capes drawn about their shoulders, and on their heads caps such as had been worn in Spain in the days of Isabel the Catholic! And smooth faces! As Cuevas well knew from recent arrivals in the island, styles had changed on the Peninsula. Gentlemen were letting their beards grow. It was no longer in fashion to shave cheek and chin, like these unknown men who were advancing toward him!

Though his flesh crept with an uncanny chill at the spectacle before him, Fernando Cuevas did not think of drawing his bow. Undoubtedly they were Spaniards! Perhaps they had disembarked in the neighboring cove which Columbus also had selected as the anchorage for his fleet in his Second Voyage.

"How can this have happened?" he thought. "How can this new colony have settled here without any report of it reaching the capital?"

He could not distinguish any one of the faces clearly, half muffled as they were by their capes and covered at the sides by the down-turned rims of the caps. He had, nevertheless, a feeling that they were all acquaintances. He had seen them somewhere before!

When the leaders of the two lines arrived in front of him, they marched straight on as though they had not seen him, and the discourtesy impelled him to speak:



"God keep Your Graces, Gentlemen!" he said aloud, and he doffed his cap in salutation.

The two files marched on without verbal response to his greeting; but one and all the men raised their right hands in unison to their caps and lifted these in recognition. He quailed in horror as he saw that each hat covered a naked skull!

Cuevas shook himself. He brushed his brow with his right hand. His forehead was dripping with a cold sweat. His knees were sinking under him. When he lowered his hand again, the ghosts had vanished!

With a cry of the Virgin's name he leapt to his feet, and dashed on the run through the breach in the old wall, out along the path toward camp, followed by the dog which was still howling. As he stopped and turned, the dog also gazed back at the ruins of Isabella, growling, his ears pointed attentively.

By the time supper was ready at camp Fernando found himself frankly ill; he could not touch the smoking wild pork that was set before him. But as he warmed his shaking body at the camp fire he could not help reflecting on what he had seen. Could there be any doubt of it? His former comrades at Isabella had left their graves to welcome him, in gratitude perhaps for his visit! In that country so completely new and hitherto inhabited by a race of human beings who had no history, legend was already beginning to fill the air; death was giving birth to tradition! Now at the end of seventeen years that land had become as Spanish as the soil of the Peninsula across the Ocean! The Spaniards who lay buried at Isabella and other towns on the island were more numerous than the colonists living!

Like all the men of his day on Hispaniola Cuevas had as yet no precise notion of the New World which had been discovered. He was still in doubt as to whether he were in Asia or on lands never before known. He had nevertheless an accurate presentiment of the future. The procession of specters which he had seen in the ruins of this town was but a counterpart of others that would soon be stalking over every region of this New World, both North and South of the equator, from the cold latitudes where the pine tree grows to the warm isles fragrant with the lemon and the orange and to the torrid plains covered with the banana! The snowy peaks of the longest range of mountains known on earth; the coasts of the Atlantic and the Pacific; rivers as broad at their mouths as seas; forests dating back in their age to the first eras of earthly vegetation; tropical valleys that were paradises on earth; vast prairies and pampas; deserts painted pink, yellow, green by mineral residues—a whole world, in short, was still to be discovered, and, within less than a half century, create for itself a new historic personality. Thousands and thousands of skeletons, like those he had seen in the procession, would soon be fertilizing the earth of the Americas! There was to remain no corner of these new lands, no spot high or low, wet or dry, fertile or barren, that would not bear as its heraldic symbol the skull and cross-bones of a Spaniard!

Cuevas reached home in Santo Domingo still sick with fever. To his surprise he found his own house sheltering three new inhabitants—the boys of Don Alonso de Ojeda who were going about the Cuevas farm with all the freedom and self-assurance they had known in their

own cabin. Lucero hastened to supply the explanation. The squaw Isabel had died. One evening she had come to the house, no less composed than she had been on former days: but she had said:

“White Chief calling! Me go. You keep my babies. Me no take on long walk!”

Lucero had been used to strange whims on the part of the Indian woman since her husband's death—she allowed her to go away without paying particular attention. Indians were always predicting wonderful things. They liked to invent stories and tell fibs likely to attract interest to their persons.

But on the next morning following, as the friars of Saint Francis went to their church, they found a woman lying on the slab of slate that covered the sepulcher of Alonso de Ojeda. On recognizing the woman as Isabel, the dead man's Indian widow, they ordered her to rise. She should not profane the House of God with a sorrow so little obedient to God's manifest will! She made no answer. When they touched her body, they found it cold in death. No one could tell how she had found her way into the church, nor what poison she had used to end her life on the grave of her Little White Chief.

This episode was to be the last moving adventure in the lives of Lucero and her husband. They lived peacefully on, slowly growing richer from their lands without marked changes in fortune, beset no more by the violent transformations, good and bad, which had brought them from the scene of their childhood in Andujar to end their days on the soil of this virgin isle. To be sure, the practical sense of the converted Jewess had

many times to intervene in sudden reversions of her husband to his dreams of gold and adventure. As Cuevas's eyes sometimes would fall on his sword with its panoply of armor that hung on one of the walls, he would feel a twinge of shame at his prosperity as a colonist. Was he so much different from any one of the cows or horses that were fattening out there on his green meadows, their glossy coats bespeaking their stupid animal-like well-being?

Glowing reports would come in from the Mainland about the colony which Balboa was governing on the Darien. If one were to believe adventurers returning from those lands, gold was being scooped up in fish nets.

"Let them scoop it!" Lucero would say. "If they are really making so much money, some of it will find its way into our pockets! Let us continue making bread and salting pork for those who are so mad for quick fortunes. The surest and most profitable way of living on these new lands is by cultivating them. Even if there is gold it will give out someday. The land we hold, however, will always produce bread. In the end only those who work the soil will be rich in this country!"

Years went by. Cuevas began to hear of the feats of Hernan Cortés in the empire of Mexico, and of the extraordinary adventure of Francisco Pizarro in the golden land called Peru. He had known both those famous conquerors when they were ordinary soldiers, friends of his old captain, Don Alonso de Ojeda! Now they had been named marquises by the King, and they were governing like true monarchs hereditary empires larger than Spain itself! He meantime was just a colonial farmer, rich in material possessions, but poor in

gold, as is always the case in primitive agricultural societies. Perhaps his one title to distinction was the fact that he and Lucero his wife were the only survivors left in the island from the First Voyage of Discovery.

The father and mother could only admire the vigorous disposition of Alonso their son, who seemed destined to bring to life again the heroic bravados of his unlucky godfather. His independence as a mere youth sometimes amounted to downright insolence.

"Why," he would say to his parents, "I was born on this soil! You came from somewhere else, to steal land that did not belong to you!"

In the person of Alonso Cuevas the "Creole" of the future was raising his crest against his European forefathers! The three sons of Ojeda were more respectful of this young bruiser than they were of his parents. Alonso had made a little army of them to attack and fight the "foreigners" born in Spain!

"We belong here!" he would say to the three mestizos. "We were born here! You were, and so was I. And who are these others? Outsiders, hungry people who could not make a living at home and have come over here to get what belongs to us!"

Fernando Cuevas would smile sadly as he discussed the boy's strange turn of mind with his wife:

"That's the way it goes!" he said. "Family affections, like the water in a river, run down hill! Parents sacrifice themselves for their children, and these in turn will sacrifice themselves for their children! We came from Spain and built a new world, working hard, biting our nails in rage, dying at times like dogs starving in the gutter! What we did may last centuries perhaps! But then some-

day the children of our children's children will calmly kick us out from under the roofs we raised as shelters over their heads, at the cost of untold suffering and immeasurable blood!"

THE END

















